NEXT WEEK A GREAT DETECTIVE STORY THAT WILL MAKE YOU SIT UP. IT IS "THE STRANGE PEMBERTON AFFAIR," BY ARCHIBALD J. PAXTON.

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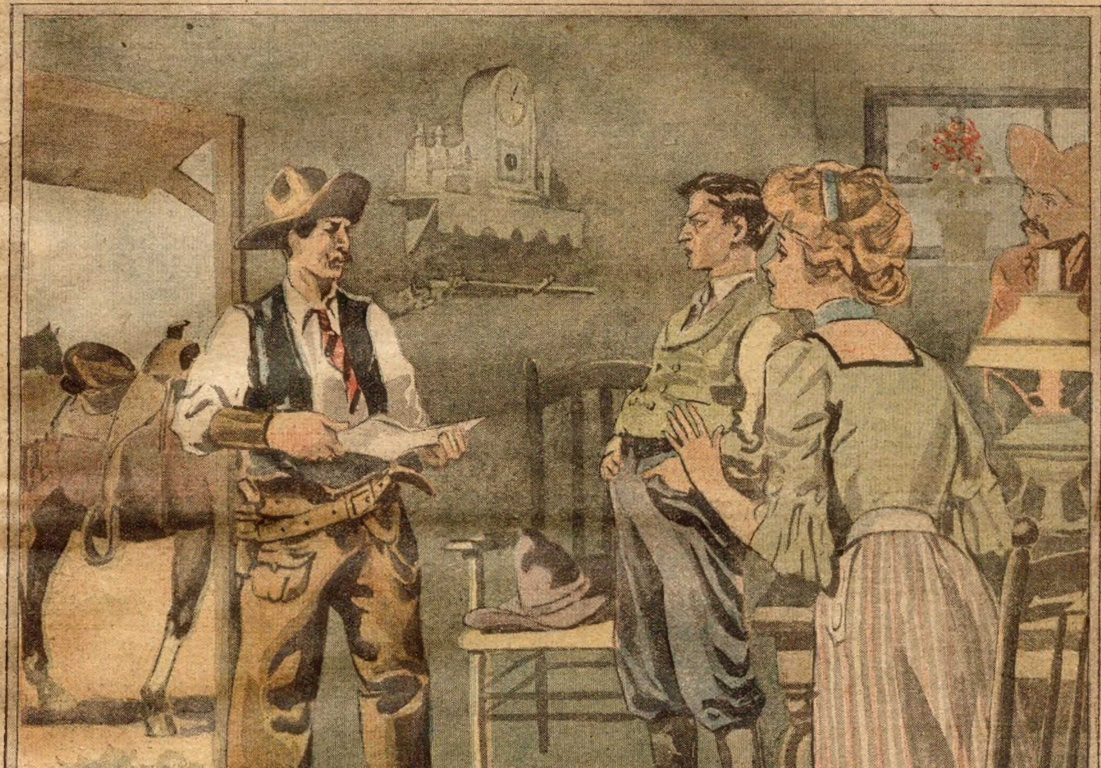

Her Captive Bandit;

Or, In the Lion's Lair

By Colonel Harper Hamilton

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CHAPTER V.

RACKLEY A BROTHER.

The cowboy flamed with wrath.

"There need be no ruin if you say otherwise, Miss Burdilla!" he snapped. "There are only four in Damon's party, and you have men enough here to take them by the nose and fling them off the ranch. Say the word and I'll call the fellows and see that it's done!"

"Count me in for one of the flingers!" composedly directed Rackley.

"Ah!" the girl sighed. "But this is no personal quarrel. We can't fight them as we have fought our rivals. It's the law, this time. We can't, we must not, resist—not openly! And what else can we do?"

"Is that mine yarn a straight game?" asked the cowboy.

"I'm afraid it is."

"Don't let that count. When they come, fire them!"

She was silent, but her manner was less depressed. Her expression changed often as she sat thinking. Her companions waited, and thus two full minutes passed.

"If," she then said, "my brother could be here this would not bother us."

"Why, I didn't know you had a brother living," exclaimed the cowboy.

"I fear I haven't. I had, once. This was his ranch, and all the live stock on it. We came here nearly nine years ago. Soon after he—he went away. We have not heard from him since. The affair of the mine is wholly my father's, but if brother is living, father does not own an acre of land here, nor a hoof upon the land."

"Eight years missing!" Rackley broke in crisply. "Who in this section knows your brother? Hereabouts men go and come,

send it entirely free.

and the population changes often. Who knows your brother by sight?"

"I doubt if any one does. Gideon Gap was then an unsettled waste, and I have no hands that were here then."

"The game is dead easy!" said the road-agent calmly. "Let me pose as your brother. I have long been absent; I have returned; I have claimed my own; I am absolute master and owner here. What say? Shall we grapple with Damon and beat him in a set-to of wits?"

"Impossible!"

"Why so?"

"The device is too bold. You might be recognized as not the man you claimed to be, or—or—why, everybody knows you as Rackley Gold!"

"Everybody," replied the road-agent serenely, "knows a chap who frequents the hills clad in a blue shirt with a red 'kerchief around his neck; that's Rackley Gold. Nobody knows him well. Suppose he changed his dress radically, and shaved off his mustache? That's no new idea with me; I've often meditated on trying the trick, just for the sport, and invading Gideon Gap. What I could risk for a frolic can be tried to save your ranch. How is it—do I pose as your brother?"

"It will work!" cried the cowboy. "Suppose somebody does turn up later that once knew your brother? Before then Damon will be gone with his banners drooping. Do it, Miss Burdilla!"

She said nothing, sitting with troubled face and indecision. For the moment she forgot who the man was that proffered his help. Her one consideration was whether the scheme would work. Ever since she came West she had loved the ranch, and loved it the more since her father fell ill and she had been mistress and manager. Eight years had made the place home, and she had her heart in it. She knew all about the miserable business of the gold mine, and knew that if the law had its way everything about her would be swept from her possession, and, what was more, that she and her invalid father would be penniless.

The stake was worth playing for, but it was hazardous, it seemed impracticable, and failure meant conflict with the law in another way.

Rackley Gold watched her keenly, analyzing her changing mood with shrewdness common to him. Presently he saw the fighting spirit pictured in her face and spoke again, very mildly.

"Try me," he suggested, "for your long-lost brother!"

"If you were that all would be saved!" she exclaimed, turning upon him. "All here was his, and he could hold it—but I've explained already. It is a daring game, and if we fail——"

"We won't fail!"

She eyed him critically, sharply, and there was another silence. Then the fighting spirit flamed into new activity. Her face brightened, even while her eyes sparkled with the warpath light.

"It shall be tried!" she decided. "Of course it will not be a long game. Success or failure will be speedy. Either that meddlesome officer will go away, beaten, or he will penetrate the scheme. It is only for a few hours. But you may meet somebody who knew my brother—or—oh! they will know you for Rackley Gold! I knew it—it can't be otherwise."

"That is my risk."

"But I would not drag you to ruin for my sake. No, no, it cannot be. See! the track to your hill home is clear. Go—leave me to fight my battle alone. I will not have your blood on my hands. Go!"

Her shapely arm was outstretched, and the index finger pointed to Tiger-foot Range. Rackley Gold ignored the finger and gazed only at its owner.

"That part of the risk is wholly my own," he responded evenly. "It is nothing. My blood will not be on your hands; it will remain where it is. Don't think of me. Sheriff Snow has seen me only at a distance when he has hunted me in the hills, and when I've robbed stages I have, just to be theatrical, worn a mask. Let me doff this blue shirt and red 'kerchief—they, not I, are Rackley Gold—and shave my upper lip and I'll chance the game. Does it stand?"

"Say yes!" urged the cowboy, giving heed to Rackley and getting a glow of admiration and good fellowship into his expression. "Say it quick, too. There is barely time."

Burdilla wavered, hesitated, tried to think judicially, failed and made her decision.

"It is yes—for a few hours! Just to fight it out with that miserable officer."

"Good!" cried the cowboy, flinging up his hat. "This beats broncho-busting and horse-taming! A rare old game! Stranger"—this to the man in the blue shirt—"you are my sort. I want to hold your music-box while you thrash the audience."

He held out his hand and the two exchanged a hearty clasp.

"My name is Jack Hardy," he added. "And, say, I was along on that little matinee last night!"

"Jack is my most faithful follower," Burdilla added.

"He looks it, and if he isn't faithful he is a clam. Now, to business. Jack, show me a shaving-brush and razor."

They went, and when, half an hour later, Rackley rejoined Burdilla she was surprised at the change in his appearance. The red handkerchief was gone, and the blue shirt succeeded by one of gray. What he had lost in the picturesque was made up for in neatness, and as his new raiment fitted more closely, he looked taller and slighter. The loss of the mustache gave him a younger appearance. On the whole he was greatly changed. He took heed to her expression as she surveyed him.

"Will I do?" he asked.

"I am surprised. The leopard has changed his spots. You are still the same man, but a casual observer would be slow to realize it. Really, I have some hope—if nobody comes here but those total strangers of Damon's party. Stay! I am lukewarm. The alteration is great, and I'm truly hopeful."

"So am I. Well, as the officers will soon be here, let's begin details. I must know something about this ranch, if I'm to be temporary owner. Jack has told me a good deal, but—wait a bit! What's my new name, anyhow?"

"Oh! my brother was named Wayland Clarke."

"I'll remember. I'm Wayland now. Now as to other things."

He asked questions incisively and she answered readily. He drank in information about her family, and about acres of land, cattle, horses, markets, prices, and many more things he might be questioned about. When he was satisfied he changed the subject.

"If there's a pinch to the shoe," he said abruptly, "it lies with your hands here. With so many men knowing of my identity, and capture, are you sure nobody will give me away?"

She laughed lightly and then replied:

"Perhaps my conscience ought to trouble me, but, anyhow, I'll say that I have indulged in a bit of fiction. First, I laid no elaborate plan to kidnap you. I happened to see you cutting bushes by the way, preparatory to holding up the stage, and my scheme was suddenly conceived; it began there and then. Next, only four of my men were concerned in the capture, so my talk of your being stopped by my armed riders was a little on the Jules Verne order."

"I always did admire Jules. Who are the four?"

"Adam Huse, Jack Hardy, Nat Allen and Olaf Eckerson."

"Are you sure you can trust them?"

"Absolutely."

"That's as we would have it. We have all the irons in the fire we can handle, without keeping a suspicious eye on a score of men of dubious character. As soon as the officers are gone——"

Jack Hardy came toward them with hasty steps.

"If you will look at the high land back of Brandy Run," he announced, "you will see a party of horsemen. They count the same as Damon's force, and that's who they must be. The pinch is at hand!"

Burdilla drew a quivering sigh. She had courage, but this trouble hit too hard for ordinary composure. It was Rackley Gold who replied, and he was serene.

"Jack," he said, "get something for us to busy ourselves with; a quirt, blanket, hat, or anything else that is inoffensive and natural. We want to be reasonably employed.

The horsemen descended the high land, passed along a distance by the side of Brandy Run, and then rode straight across the level, their faces toward the Clarke buildings. The trio who waited for them were all carelessly occupied with a hat, into which Jack was fitting a feather. It was an innocent seeming group.

As the men came closer Rackley stole a side-glance at them. It required only one look to prove that they were no weak foemen. One and all were muscular fellows, resolute of face, alert of manner and anything but desirable opponents. They would not go down easily to defeat.

Burdilla, on her part, was suddenly minded to look at Rackley Gold. Before, she had been excited, ready to grasp at any means of escape from disaster, but not nervous. Now it came to her like a blow that she was trusting everything to an outlaw, a man regarded by many as a hardened criminal, an Ishmael of the hills. Her courage waned and she felt ready to collapse.

She felt that she had been reckless, foolish, mad. What surer proof than that she was trusting Rackley Gold?

The riders drew rein and their leader dismounted. He gave brief greeting, and then plunged into business.

"I want to see the master of this ranch!" he announced.

The road-agent stepped calmly forward.

"Easily done," he replied. "I am master here!"

CHAPTER VI.

HARD PRESSED.

The questioner received the information with a smile of sarcastic amusement.

"You may be master here, in a way," he replied, "but you are not the man I am after. He is double your age. I want Daniel Clarke."

"Sorry," said Rackley Gold composedly, "but my father is ill."

"Your—what?" questioned the officer slowly.

"My father."

"And who may you be?"

"Wayland Clarke, son of the Daniel you mentioned."

"Indeed! But I have been told Wayland Clarke had not been here in years, and that his whereabouts were unknown."

"I've been away," explained Rackley. "As to my whereabouts being unknown, my correspondents have been few, and I've not often written even to the few. Hope I have not neglected anybody seriously."

The stranger had been dividing his attention between listening and thinking. He had heard something not expected, but a sudden straightening of his spare figure indicated that he believed the news of no importance.

"You will have to settle that with your correspondents," he said drily. "My business is with Daniel Clarke. To be brief, my name is Damon, and I am an officer, a sheriff, in fact. I regret that it is my duty to serve a writ upon your father."

"For what?" demanded Rackley, like one angry.

"That is a matter I should prefer to mention only when reading the writ to him, but I have no wish to make things unpleasant for you. In a word, Mr. Clarke has been largely interested in the Good News mine, at Cedar City. The mine is now in trouble, work stopped, no gold coming in, bills unpaid. The small stockholders allege fraud, and lay all the blame on Mr. Clarke."

"If so they are monumental liars!" cried Rackley hotly. "My father is a scrupulously honest man——"

"My dear sir, I do not charge him. I am only an instrument of law. Being what I am, I'm here to attach this entire property."

"The deuce you are!" retorted the road-agent. "To get at the point you make, let us admit that my father is a stockholder in the Good News, though that I'll only admit provisionally. Suppose he is, and that you have a writ, how the dickens are you going to attach my property to satisfy it? For, Mr. Officer, I own this ranch and every hoof and hide on it!"

Damon looked bewildered. Then one of his men whispered to him, and he studied briefly. It was not his way to take long stretches for deliberation, however, and he lived up to his fashion.

"I admit that I've heard this place was once that of Mr. Clarke, junior, but report says he has long been absent—missing is the word—and that Daniel Clarke has come into the property."

"If anybody has come into it I don't know it!" snapped Rackley, with a show of indignation that made Jack Hardy grin.

"Well, in any case, your father has had use of the place, has bettered it, and has taken out money from the sales of stock——"

"And put it into that confounded mine! He has been bled by his mining partners, swindled right and left, stabbed in the back. There you have the plain story, sir."

Damon seemed at a loss for a moment; then his dry smile appeared again.

"I am not a lawyer for the prosecution," he said, "so I'll not argue the case with you. Do you say that Daniel Clarke does not own even the cattle and horses here?"

"Not a hoof!"

"I admit that I am aware no deed is on record conveying the ranch from you to him. My information was that you were dead, or supposed to be, and that he had inherited all. You say you are Wayland Clarke. Where is the proof?"

"Here!" replied Burdilla, surprised at her own steadiness of voice. "I am Miss Clarke. I ought to know my brother."

Damon removed his hat and inclined his head slightly.

"I agree with you, Miss Clarke," he answered easily. "Ah! matters are not as I expected. I am at a loss. The reading of the writ is a mere formality, while the attachment is the backbone of the business. I will see Mr. Daniel Clarke!"

This was just what the conspirators wanted to prevent. Burdilla had been to her father and warned him, in part, as to the nature of the expected trouble and the plans for defeating it. Although he did not know of Rackley Gold, he was aware that somebody was impersonating his son, and being of an elastic conscience and partially deranged, he approved of the scheme. His ability to carry out his part of the deception was doubted, and Burdilla took up the thread of conversation and earnestly besought that the service of the writ be dispensed with and the sick man left in peace.

She failed; the officer was polite to her, and reasonably civil to Rackley, who added his protests, but he held doggedly to his resolution to see Mr. Clarke. In the end Burdilla yielded. After all, perhaps it was best. Daniel Clarke had a degree of cunning in his mental disturbance, and it might possibly serve as well as sane acumen. To deny Damon was to awaken fresh suspicion.

Burdilla conducted him to her father. Rackley and Jack remained with the other officers, though near at hand. The road-agent was uncertain what to expect, as he had never seen Daniel. He listened with outward carelessness and secret worry.

Presently there was something to hear. An angry voice floated from a room above, a roaring like that of an angry animal, and Hardy grinned in amusement.

"The old man is alive!" he commented, his own voice subdued.

"How will he carry it off?" asked Rackley.

"It's a toss-up!"

Several minutes the roaring continued; then the party filed back into view. Damon did not look highly pleased. He walked silently to his horse, mounted, and then turned to Burdilla.

"I'm going to Gideon Gap," he stated. "You will see me again. Mr. Wayland, you have a fine property here!"

His old, half-sarcastic smile accompanied the last words and left them uncertain. Damon was not easily read. He lifted his hat, spoke a word or two to his followers and all rode away, their faces toward the town. When they had gone a dozen rods Jack spoke eagerly.

"What luck, Miss Burdilla?"

"Better than I expected. Father met Damon composedly, declared he owned nothing here, and that all was his son's. After a little he lost his temper and said things, but he made no break. Really, he was like a misused man remonstrating when hard pressed. Damon read his writ, but he seemed to have no heart in his task."

"I overheard one of his men urge an attachment on property here," continued Jack, "but Damon replied that he had before now got into trouble by attaching the stuff of the wrong man, and he wouldn't take any risk. Damon's candle is snuffed out!"

"Don't think it!" Rackley retorted. "The fellow has a stubborn nature that will not hunt cover easily. He will be heard from again, but how, I don't know. He will strike somehow!"

"But how?" asked Burdilla quickly.

"He will, first of all, direct his guns against me. Are you sure he can find nobody who knew your brother?"

"I can't imagine his finding a man."

"Good!" commented Rackley, but his enthusiasm was not great; he believed the officer would find somebody if it took a month to do it.

The defense took an account of stock. What were their resources, and what could they do to ward off danger? Burdilla and Jack did most of the talking, for the road-agent saw only one fact in the game—it was their hope to play the bluff to the end, and trust to luck and the devices of the hour to win a dubious undertaking.

They were still talking when word came that Mr. Clarke wished to see Rackley. He had been told that one of the ordinary hands had posed as Wayland Clarke and won the first heat in the race. His grim old heart had gone out to that unknown man, and he wanted to see him.

As there was no visible objection Burdilla asked Rackley to go, but reminded him again that her father was not right mentally, and that anything was possible from him. Rackley went accordingly, and was soon in Mr. Clarke's room.

He saw a well-furnished apartment, in the center of which was a person in a great easy chair. He was a big, unpleasant-looking man, with massive arms and legs, broad shoulders, a bushy gray beard and an animal-like face. His garments were good and neat, and, in brief, he had the veneer of the gentleman over his coarseness. Money had essayed to win a victory over coarseness, but with only partial success. The broad face was rather shapely, and it was strong, keen and aggressive, but the steel-like glitter in the big eyes told of mental trouble.

Just now the lion of the ranch was in good humor, and he hailed Rackley with boisterous good will.

"Hallo, my good broncho-buster!" he began. "Dropped in to see the hermit, have you? Look at him—half paralyzed, fastened to this chair by fate, out of the game of life, tucked away on the shelf as a useless thing—just waiting for death! That's Dan Clarke. So that blamed sheriff came and wanted to levy on our goods and chattels?"

"He wanted to—but he didn't!"

"Bravo! Beat at the game of wits. Ha, ha! The trick was well thought of, and well played. So you passed as my son? That scamp is dead, or so supposed, but you would not want to adopt all his history. Never mind that. So you fooled Damon! Excellent! It has been a long while since I was out of this room, and I've lost all run of our hands, but I am glad we had one equal to this game. It took brains. I wanted to see the bully boy who carried it off. What's your real name?"

Rackley recalled the name he had given to Sheriff Snow, and thought it would do as well as any for Daniel Clarke.

"Kidd, John Kidd," he replied.

"Kidd, eh? Strikes me I have heard that name before. Where? Oh! I have heard it: One Captain Kidd, a gay old chap of days gone by—a sailor of the seas, a freebooter, a pirate. Are you a relation of his? Do you trace your ancestry back to the captain? Or are you the original Kidd himself? So you beat Damon off? Good job!"

"For the time being, he is sent about his business. He may return——"

"Return! If he does, keep him here. We have land enough to bury him in fine shape. Set upon him—kill the scoundrel! So he would take my ranch property away? I tell you if he comes back to——"

Daniel had grown excited, and he gave free rein to his wrath and talked hotly, savagely, wildly. And while he spoke his eyes glittered with the unpleasant light

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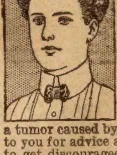

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that was not that of perfect reason. Finally he talked himself out of his passion and grew crafty.

"That Damon is a knave!" he said. "Wants to levy on things here, eh? It is not justice. I am a stockholder in the Good News mine, and I've done most of the business formerly. So they say I acted dishonestly, eh? Well, if I did, let them"—he paused, chuckled and added—"let them find something to seize. My son Wayland owns all here, and you are Wayland. You will keep up that claim, Mr.—ah! I remember your name. Captain Kidd, pirate! There is a song—I've forgotten some words—let me think!"

He paused, meditated, and then burst forth in riotous music:

"My name was Captain Kidd,
And so wickedly I did
God's laws I did forbid,
When I sailed, when I sailed!"

The room rang with the sound, which was not wholly destitute of melody, and the tremendous lung-power of the man was remarkable. He checked himself momentarily, shook a fat finger at Rackley and resumed:

"I murdered William Moore,
And I left him in his gore,
Not many leagues from shore,
When I sailed, when I sailed!"

The last word was followed by a booming laugh, after which the man calmed down gradually.

"I can't tell you, Captain Kidd," he said, "how glad I am to have you here. I always did like your way, as revealed by history, and I feel that you will be a shining light on this ranch. Come to see me often. Drop in and tell me of your deeds on the deep sea. I can appreciate them, because, according to Damon, I'm something of a pirate myself. So they object to my way with the Good News mine? Bah! In this life each man must feather his own nest or it'll be pin-feathers. Cheated them in the mine, did I? Ha, ha!"

The lion had become the fox; noise had given place to cunning. The old rascal chuckled, winked at Rackley, and plainly gloated in his misdeeds. Despite his evidences of unbalanced mind, his companion now had less fear that Clarke would betray the present scheme through want of judgment. His shrewdness had outlived his bodily energy.

Rackley did his part in the talking, but finally ended the interview and left the room and the house. Burdilla met him outside, questioning him with her eyes and showing embarrassment. It was plain that she did not feel pride in the crafty old man in the upper room.

A further consultation took place with the two and Jack Hardy as participants. How to make Rackley's position as owner of the ranch a reasonable feature of the case was the problem. Nothing was said about his going to the hills, and much about his remaining.

He was content to remain, though he knew that his head was already practically in a noose. How he could face the men of Gideon Gap and not be recognized, and not have the noose tightened, he did not see. However, it was a fine game, a great gamble, and he was content. The greater the risk, the better he was pleased.

Just before noon Burdilla was standing before the door of her house. Jack Hardy was away somewhere, and Rackley in the room allotted to him. She had been thinking, and so deeply that she did not heed visible signs. Really, there was something to see, and it finally came in the way of a surprise.

Three horsemen rounded the corner of the house, and she recognized Damon, one of his assistants, and a dweller in Gideon Gap. There was an air of serenity about all, and Damon removed his hat with his former politeness.

"Pray, Miss Clarke," he said with urbanity, "don't think me over-critical, but the chance is offered to have your brother duly identified himself. Here is Mr. Alfonso Hay, long of yonder town, and one who knew Wayland Clarke well. He will, as a matter of form, identify Wayland as before said. Will you call your brother?"

Burdilla's courage went with a rush. She knew Hay well by reputation, and knew him to be an unstable and unreliable man in certain ways. If he once knew Wayland—her spirits sank low, and she was trying to find a way of escape when affairs suddenly reached a crisis.

Rackley came from the house and was with them.

CHAPTER VII.

POINTS OF ATTACK.

The road-agent had heard nothing, but he knew from the nature of the group of horsemen and Burdilla's worried face that trouble was afloat. He was not long kept in ignorance of its nature. Sheriff Damon smiled his dry smile and addressed the newcomer.

"Sir," he said, "I beg that you won't think me captious, but it seems to be of mutual interest that you should be formally identified. Mr. Alfonso Hay knew you well in the old days, so I have brought him along. Mr. Hay, kindly tell us if this is Wayland Clarke!"

Rackley had been dividing his attention between Damon and Hay. What he saw in the latter quarter was worth attention. Hay first looked blank; then a sudden light of recognition overspread his face. He pulled himself up in saddle as if lifted by a mysterious power, after which he urged his horse forward and held out his hand.

"Wayland, old boy!" he cried, "how are you? Mr. Damon has been so skeptical that I was not sure I was to see you after all. Pard, put it there!"

He had reached Rackley's side, and he glowed with something which looked like enthusiasm, but that was not all. His back was to his fellow horsemen, and he bestowed a broad wink upon Rackley.

"Why," he added jovially, "this is like old times. Reckon you and I are the only two men who were in this section when it was developed. Say, those were days worth living! No crowding, no rivalry, no selfish schemes, but just nature and man. Glad to see you again!"

By that time they were shaking hands with fervor. Rackley was not one to fall by the way in a game of wits, and he had forced a pretense of recognition in return. He beamed upon Alfonso with a fair degree of the natural, and gave the slight hand in his grasp a cordial reception. Really, two old friends seemed to be reunited. Hay again sat erect, winked again and went on gaily.

"Remember the time when Peter Larrimore, having decided that the land where Gideon Gap now is was a good site for a town, led a party there and found a buzzard already in possession? 'One of the real, early people,' he said. Pretty good joke, eh?"

Rackley Gold was bewildered. This voluble young man was perfectly natural, yet there was good reason to believe he was playing a part. But why? Surprised as he was, Rackley lost no chance. He reciprocated, and the next few minutes were given to recalling old times of which the road-agent, for one, knew absolutely nothing.

Sheriff Damon waited patiently. If he was annoyed at the turn of affairs he did not express regret, either verbally or in his expression. When a lull enabled him to say more he took advantage of the opportunity calmly and with good nature.

"Mr. Clarke," he said to Rackley, "I beg that you will accept my apologies if I have seemed hard to satisfy. I have my duty to perform at all times. Now that Mr. Hay has identified you I am satisfied"—he lingered a little after the word, glanced sharply at the so-called owner of the ranch, and composedly added—"fully satisfied. It is pleasant to have amiable relations restored. Now, I feel that my official presence may be a trifle vexatious, so I will go. Mr. Hay, do you accompany us?"

"I've got to," replied Alfonso, "or I'll lose my financial emolument for the current day. Wayland, any time you're in Gideon Gap I shall be glad to see you in Pratt's kitchen department. I wash dishes there. So-long, pard!"

He waved his hand and turned. Rackley made a suitable reply, the sheriff added his dry smile and a few well-chosen words, and then the visitors rode away.

They left a puzzled pair behind them. Rackley and Burdilla watched until they were well away, and then turned to each other. Both faces showed wonder, uncertainty and gravity.

"Who is that man?" Rackley asked brusquely.

"Alfonso Hay? Why, he is a never-do-well of Gideon Gap. I don't think there is a vicious element in his nature, but he is considered as the most worthless man there. Fairly well educated, he has filled about every menial position in town, having been hostler, billiard-marker, barkeeper, cook and so on. It isn't in him to be anything more, simply because he lacks ambition. Now I think of it, I've heard it said he was early in this region. How lucky he thought he recognized you as my brother!"

"Did he think so?"

"What do you mean?"

"Did your brother look like me?"

"Oh! no. True, Wayland was about your build, and his hair was the color of yours, or about that; but look like you—not in the least! Alfonso Hay couldn't have known Wayland well."

"Miss Clarke, Hay recognized me—as somebody!"

"Why, you don't mean—that he really knows you?"

"I don't know. The flash of recognition that swept over his face was no pretense; he either recognized me or thought he did. The question is, did he think me Wayland Clarke or—Rackley Gold?"

"Oh! he may know you! Sir, it is asking too much of you to let you stay here. You must not sacrifice yourself for us. I beg that you will escape while you can!"

Her manner was frightened and earnest, but Rackley smiled serenely.

"Unless you command it emphatically, I shall see this thing out. The game is new to me, but I like it. It's a beautiful gamble! Bear in mind that I am your sole reliance. If I go the jig is up and Damon levies on your goods and chattels. Good-by to your horses and cattle!"

"Better that than good-by to your life. Go, I beseech you!"

"But it is only a few hours since you brought me here, a captive tiger, to amuse you. You surrounded me with barriers to escape; your armed men rode the outskirts, and were bidden to prevent my escape."

"Oh, sir, sir!" Burdilla cried, growing crimson of face, "I pray you, don't remind me of my fictions. It was all fiction. Chance showed me a way to seize you; I accepted the chance and took you, but it was only for a brief jest. Only the four men who helped to seize you knew you were here, so the talk about my armed outriders was a dream. There was nothing, last night, to prevent you from going, and —I expected you would go. My wretched joke has lost all charm!"

"Expected to go, I stayed," said Rackley, smiling lightly. "Thought to be useless, fortune has shown me a way to be useful. Unless you actually command it, I continue to stay!"

"You may lose your life——"

"And I may not. Let me play the game. As long as I am needed in my fictitious role, let me remain. The lair suits the lion. But this Alfonso Hay! I wish I knew who he thinks I am. For the time being he is not inclined to betray whatever secret he hides. How far can he be trusted?"

"Not in any degree. He's worthless. What viciousness will not do, his mental folly will."

"I asked him to come here again. I hope he will do it, for I want to see his mind inside out."

"He will betray you!"

"Maybe, if he knows who I am. Let me see. There are now five men who know too much—your four hands, and this Alfonso."

"Jack Hardy and the rest of my men are faithful; they will say nothing."

"I trust you are right. That leaves Alfonso the most to be dreaded of all. I want to see him again, but it is not prudent to go to Gideon Gap. Sheriff Simon Snow is there. Wonder if it's sure Simon will not know me? He has only seen me at a distance, blue of shirt and red of 'kerchief, but he may go beyond my change of spots. Rather a multiplicity of dangerous characters. If I am to be betrayed, I wonder who will do it?"

"You must go, you must go!" Burdilla cried hurriedly.

"And leave Damon to sweep this ranch like a master checker-player?"

"Better that than that you suffer for us."

"To be candid, I don't intend to suffer. Now, pray don't rob me of my pleasure. I like this game. No real danger—if it wasn't for mysterious Alfonso Hay."

"He is enough to settle all. Erratic, unreliable, well-meaning, but a mere bubble of a man, he will betray you. That is, if he recognized you as Rackley Gold.

"We will trust that he did not. He may have thought me really your brother. Be that as it may, he gives zest to the game. The more points of attack that are open, the more fun for me. Remember, however, that I am identified as Wayland Clarke and barricaded here. It will not be so easy to dislodge me. Be comforted; the sun shines for us."

The road-agent's manner had grown suddenly cheerful and confident. Dropping the realities of the case he was trying to encourage Burdilla. He persisted for ten minutes, and she had grown far more hopeful when he finally sauntered away, saying he would look his new ranch over.

His sauntering walk took him past a shack at the outer edge of the group of buildings. Unseen by him, two men were there. One was a cowboy, and the other a tramp who had drifted in three days before. He was not a prepossessing man to look at. He was in rags, and his further condition matched his clothes. Once muscular, he was now, though scarcely more than thirty, shaky of limb and untidy of person. Baldheaded and pock-marked, he was not blessed with many of the better gifts of fortune.

This person, who gave the name of Mathew, had appeared from the hills, soliciting alms from the employes, and as it was the rule of the ranch to feed the unfortunate, he had been given food and shelter. The few who knew he was there thought he had outstayed his welcome, but he gave no heed, kept rather close to the shack, and spent his time mainly sleeping and eating.

He was eating now, while the cowboy watched him as he would an animal of doubtful character. Through the open door they saw Rackley Gold, erect, strong, masterful, as he swung along his way. Mathew easily recognized the fact that he was regarding a man out of the common and grew curious.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"The owner of this ranch, Wayland Clarke," returned the cowboy.

Mathew had a mouthful of food raised halfway to his lips. It became stationary, and, eying his companion sharply, he repeated:

"Who?"

"Wayland Clarke!"

"The devil he is!" exclaimed the tramp.

"Yes. Why not?"

The mouthful of food got in motion again. Mathew took it in, moving his jaws a few times, and said:

"I thought the owner was a girl—and her father."

"They have been, in a way, but only because the real owner, her brother, has been away. Now he's back; came last night. That's the man."

"Oh!"

Mathew asked no more questions then, and ate steadily, though not with the appetite usual to him. He took his food mechanically, gazing always at the dish. The cowboy lingered, feeling a little pity for the human wreck before him, and a little amusement, and much of contempt. Presently he filled a pipe with tobacco, laid it before Mathew, spoke a careless good day and went out.

"The fellow forgot to beg for a drink, for once!" he muttered as he walked off.

Left alone, Mathew lighted the pipe and fell to smoking dreamily. Ten minutes passed, his mind evidently profoundly occupied, and then he, too, fell to muttering.

"So he's Wayland Clarke? The devil he is!"

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The Withered Hand;

Or, The Story of a Terrible Inheritance

By HARPER W. THORNTON

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CHAPTER VIII.

MOMENTS OF TERROR.

HABBERTON had barely reached the door when he became aware that he was not the sole tenant of that dark chamber.

From the direction of the head of the staircase came a footfall which he could distinctly hear but the maker of which he could not see.

Into his mind came another thought which sent a sudden tremor through every vibrating nerve. Was he between two fires? Was the unseen one another of Kalmah's devilish companions and had he been drawn into a death trap of his own setting?

Beyond the door a deathlike silence reigned. Not the smallest fillet of light pervaded the corridor and Habberton, still gripping the revolver, thought of a thousand things in the space of one fleeting second.

Why not turn and wait for the creeper in the hallway? If he was a Hindu he would have the advantage of him and could find his throat before a dark hand could be lifted against him.

He knew that the Hindu is wonderfully endowed with sight, that his deep-set eyes can see where other eyes are helpless, but Habberton had arms and muscles of steel and, knowing this, he resolved to set his powers against those of the unknown.

The sound of footsteps ceased as suddenly as he had heard it.

"Hang it all," said Habberton under his breath, "this infernal necromancy is too much for me. If Jack were here——"

But Jack was not there and it was useless to drift into that channel.

He was speculating still when to his sudden horror the closed door opened again.

He fell back unseen.

The next moment something darted towards the door, crossed the threshold and was inside before Habberton could put forth a hand. The portal banged shut once more.

"I'll wait for Jack," ejaculated the new heir. "He can't be absent much longer," and then he went back down that lonely corridor, descended the stair and fell into the old chair in the dismal library.

It was the work of a moment to turn on the lights and flood the place with a pleasant glow. He wanted something to steady his nerves now. He had previously discovered a secret sideboard set ingeniously in the wall and took from it a bottle and a little goblet.

The liquor which he poured out had a golden color and glistened in the light as it dropped into the glass. Habberton raised it to his lips, but paused.

What if the stuff had been drugged by Kalmah? He changed color at the thought, but the next moment thought that it was his dead uncle's vintage and he certainly did not use poisoned wine.

"Life or death I'll take the risk," he laughed and the rim of the goblet was at his lips when that same lone, terrifying cry rang in his ears.

"The devil," he cried, dashing the goblet to the floor where the liquid spread out in fantastic shapes and the next moment he was on his feet.

"It's a woman's voice," he said as he listened breathless for the repetition which did not come. "Was it Thaddora's?"

Thaddora!

How strange that the name of that beautiful and mystifying creature should rise so often to his lips.

He stood erect, looking into the dimly lighted hall through the open doorway. No one came in. The last sound of that cry had died away and not even the semblance of an echo had followed.

Suddenly the room was wrapped in darkness.

With a curse Habberton put out his hand for the button which would switch on the lights, but he was seized by an unseen hand and forced into a chair.

The revolver lay on the table but he could not reach it. His throat was madly clutched and by a hand which sent an icy chill to every part of his body.

It was a hand unlike any he had ever seen or felt.

There seemed no flesh on the bones and, moreover, the fingers were as cold as ice.

The thought that swept across his brain was terrifying in the extreme.

It was the Withered Hand!

Habberton, terrified beyond measure, put up a struggle, but not for long.

He was held in the chair by a power against which he could make no headway. He was in the grip of the Unseen.

Where was Clawson? What adverse fate was keeping him away and why had he deserted him, anyway?

Not a word was spoken by the owner of that devilish hand. Habberton felt his powers rapidly leaving him.

Suddenly, however, the clutch was loosened. The room again swam in light and he was alone.

For a moment he remained in the chair collecting his scattered energies and then springing to his feet, he dashed into the hall.

At that moment the front portal opened and with a cry of relief he sprang towards the person who entered.

It was Jack.

"Just in time!" cried Habberton. "The fiends of the dark regions are at work."

"By Jove! you look as if you have seen the whole outfit," laughed Clawson.

"Don't twit me, Jack. I've just passed through the most terrible experience of my life. They are here, the whole devilish band. They are now in the sealed room. I've seen Kalmah in the garb of an executioner and have felt the Withered Hand at my throat!"

He pulled Jack into the library and plumped him forcibly into the chair.

"Tell me," ejaculated Clawson, as he looked into his friend's face. "Talk fast and give me the whole history of your adventure. What has happened, anyway?"

Habberton caught his breath once more and talked rapidly as he had been ordered to do. Jack listened with a smile at the corners of his mouth, his eyes twinkling.

"So you didn't get to use your revolver?" Jack said, picking up the weapon from the table. "Well, it would have done you precious little service. The loads have been withdrawn."

"No!" cried Habberton.

"Look for yourself."

The new heir took the weapon and examined it, handing it back to Clawson with a confirmatory gesture. It was true! The revolver was for the present useless.

"It's the cry we want to investigate," said Habberton. "It's that long, lone cry of despair or mercy—I cannot tell which."

"I'm at your service," answered Jack, "but first a sip of this for my ride back has given me a thirst."

He picked up the bottle and held between him and the light.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "It's a bottle like the one which played an important part in the Pichegru case in Paris. You drank none of this liquor, eh, Delos?"

"No, fate intervened."

"Thank fate the balance of your days," smiled Clawson. "The rascally Hindu who slipped through my clutches in France killed with a bottle like this one. One drop of cobra venom does the work."

Habberton shuddered and, picking up the bottle, threw it against the wall where the golden draught trickled to the floor.

"Now," continued Clawson, rising, "now we'll ferret out that cry."

"One moment," said Habberton. "Let us see if my venerated uncle is watching us."

He went to the curtained niche and drew the somber folds aside.

"It's the Ace of Diamonds this time," he said, looking back at his friend with a smile. "Magic is at work."

Jack approached and for a moment the two gazed at the red diamond which stood revealed in place of the portrait of the late owner of The Black Larches.

"Oh, we'll stop all this deviltry," laughed Clawson. "I like mysteries. Come now. Which way shall it be?"

Habberton led the way into the hall.

"Straight to the camp of the foe!" he exclaimed. "Let it be the west wing."

The next instant there rang throughout the old house for the third time that eventful night that startling, horrifying cry.

Habberton followed it with an ejaculation. Jack Clawson looked startled despite his composure.

"The stair! the stair!" shouted Habberton. "Look! in the name of heaven, Jack!"

Already Clawson was gazing up the wide steps of the main staircase. The landing above swam in a singular light. The rays seemed to dart and swirl in many directions, but the main light itself was centered about a certain object.

At the head of the flight stood a tall beautiful figure. It was robed in white so transparent that the startled pair below could follow the outlines of a perfect human form. It was the figure of Thaddora and as they gazed there sprang to the girl's side a half naked demon in whose uplifted hand was clutched the wavy bladed knife.

"Quick!" cried Habberton. "She is the victim of the Mystics!" and he bounded up the stair.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CRIMSON SIGN.

The sight of Thaddora on the landing, menaced by the knife of the crafty Hindu, was enough to take the breath of Habberton and Clawson. The fact that the girl was as yet a mystery to them—one as deep as the other one that hung over The Black Larches—did not deter them and their sole and burning desire was to rescue her from the peril that threatened.

Habberton had not reached the middle of the flight when the singular blaze of light which had shown them this startling tableau vanished as suddenly as it had sprung into being. The whole scene was enveloped in darkness.

Even this did not stay Habberton. He bounded to the top of the staircase, but halted in the gloom with his face turned toward the end of the west corridor where stood the door of the forbidden chamber.

Clawson of course was at his heels.

"She is not here," said Habberton in a hoarse whisper. "The devil's magic has beaten us!"

Jack said nothing, but looked into that pall of darkness where lurked the mystery of that eventful night.

"The west corridor," continued Habberton pointing forward. "Yonder lies the mystery and its solution."

'Then let us go forward and solve it at once."

The new heir hesitated. Their advance might mean death to Thaddora and the young man naturally halted.

"If we cannot fathom the depths tonight then let us wait till morning," suggested Jack.

"I am between two fires," confessed Habberton. "Promptness may seal the girl's doom at the hands of the Hindus and procrastination may work a like disaster."

"I'll risk the latter and take my chances," was the response, and a moment afterward they retreated down the stair and again entered the library.

Habberton turned on the lights and looked into his companion's face. Jack was grave and thoughtful. In all his career on the trails of human puzzles he had not encountered one quite so baffling as this.

The old house seemed to have lapsed into dead silence again. If the rain that pattered on the roof and among the shrubbery outside made a noise it was not heard. Habberton rose and tiptoed to the hallway from whence he looked up the staircase. It was as dark as before.

"I'm going to take a look at these old books," said Jack, rising and crossing the room to the main bookcase. "Years ago I used to revel in the mystic and I haven't altogether lost my taste for it. By the way," and he cast a look at Habberton. "You have really told me but little about your uncle's will. When was it made?"

"A full year ago," was the reply.

"And he died—"

"Just ten months after the document was drawn by his solicitor, Clovis Polly of Polly & Jolly, Solicitors, Legal Square."

Jack seemed to make a mental note of the name.

"He was in his right mind when he executed the paper?" he asked with a little smile gathering at the corners of his lips.

"He is supposed to have been compos mentis, but for the life of me, I cannot understand why he should leave me—his unknown nephew—such a burdensome charge. Perhaps he held a grudge against me."

"Your mother, I believe you have told me, never mentioned the name of her brother?"

"Never but once in my presence. There seemed a gulf between them, and I inferred from what she said at the time that my relative was a sour old man who cared nothing for his kin."

"But," put in Jack, "he seems to have thought of you when he came to dispose of his wealth."

"Aye, and from what I have seen and endured since I came into possession of this accursed inheritance, I wish he would have ladled it out elsewhere."

"Don't complain," laughed Clawson, turning once more to the library. "Take everything, Kalmah and his crafty brethren included."

The next moment he was moving slowly along the bookshelves scanning the backs of the old volumes that burdened them. Habberton leaned back in his chair and kept his eyes upon him.

"I never saw such a mass of mystical rubbish," Jack suddenly ejaculated. "The old curmudgeon—beg your pardon, Delos—must have been daffy on the subject of Hindu black art. Whatever put the idea in his head?"

"Kalmah perhaps."

"There you go again. Always Kalmah! It's like a man lost in the woods. He travels in a circle and ever comes back to the same old tree. I recognize several books, the duplicates of which I ran across whilst on the Pichegru case in Paris. Old Pichegru was a book-fiend and his tastes are in the same direction as your uncle's."

"There can be no connection between the two cases?" ventured Habberton.

"None, only there was a crafty Hindu devil in the Pichegru puzzle. He slipped through my fingers, as I have told you—"

Jack paused abruptly and suddenly jerked a think black bound volume from its place on the shelf.

"By Jove!" Habberton heard him say as he held the book towards the light. "This is no duplicate. It's the same blessed book!"

Habberton left his seat and went over to where Clawson stood.

"What have you found, Jack?"

"Well, my boy, I've run across one of the books that I saw in old Pichegru's library."

"How do you know it's the same?"

"See, here's where I marked one of the pages. After the little old Frenchman was murdered, and most mysteriously so, I went through his books and this one attracted me so that for safety I scribbled my initials on this page, as you see," and he thrust the book into Habberton's face.

"Well," drawled the new heir, "and what do you make of all this? Perhaps Pichegru's library was sold after his death and some of the books may have fallen into my uncle's possession."

"Admitted," smiled Jack, "but you don't know what became of old Jules Pichegru's books?"

"No."

"Most of them were stolen one night some days after the tragedy, stolen as I believe, through the machinations of the dark-skinned reprobate who slipped through my fingers."

"A Hindu you said he was?"

"Yes—like your dear friend, Kalmah," and Jack's face again assumed an expression of merriment.

"And that is one of the Pichegru books?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then—"

Habberton did not complete his sentence for Jack by a sudden move reached the table and threw himself into a chair.

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"Look here!" he said, casting a look into Habberton's surprised face. "This book has been read lately."

"Not by me for I don't understand a word of its outlandish contents."

"Of course not. The edges of several leaves have been pasted together and that within the last few hours for, as you can see for yourself, the mucilage is not quite dry."

Habberton bent over the volume and Jack demonstrated that he was correct.

"Some one has been here during our brief absence," he continued. "Of course the book may have been taken from the shelf weeks or even months ago, but it has been pasted within the last few hours."

"By whom?"

"That's the nut to crack," laughed Jack. "Now if your daffy relative were alive—"

"Which he is not—"

"We might account for the pasting of the leaves, "finished Clawson. "Dead men don't do such things, therefore we will have to look to the living for the solution of the mystery."

In another second both men were gazing towards the open door which led into the hall.

Marie was there, her face as white as her shroud would be some day and one of her hands clinging to the lintel for support.

"What is it, girl?" exclaimed Habberton, springing to her side and drawing her within the room.

"Drusilla——"

"What?—Where?—"

"In the corridor overhead. Oh, why did I ever come to this accursed house? The old woman—my time next——"

Jack was already in the hall and at the foot of the stair. Habberton hurriedly deposited Marie on the nearest settee and was at his side.

They went up the flight together.

"Try the east wing first," said Habberton. "There's where we found Janus, you know."

But Clawson had already turned in that direction and was racing down the darkened place without much regard for any dangers that might lie in wait for him.

"Here she is!" he called out a moment later as Habberton came up well blown. "You've got a match, Delos?"

A little flame leaped up at the end of Habberton's fingers. He lowered his body with the match.

"Great God!" welled from his throat. "Look at her forehead, Jack. It's the Ace of Diamonds!"

Jack's finger rested on the crimson sign; he said nothing.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN OF MYSTERY.

For a minute neither spoke.

Habberton's match flickered and went out, leaving them in darkness with old Drusilla.

"She's dead, of course?" said Habberton, breaking the deathly silence.

"I don't know about that. The body's still warm, and, by Jove! here's a pulse."

"Good! After all she may solve the mystery," cried Habberton. "To the library with the old girl."

Already Jack had lifted old Drusilla from the floor—not much of a task—and was carrying her towards the staircase.

In the room below they found Marie still in her swoon and but little attention was paid to her. Old Drusilla was laid on the tiger rug and the two friends bent over her.

"She's still on this side of the grave," said Jack after a moment's examination. "We'll keep the spark of life alive as long as possible."

"Don't let her die," cried Habberton. "She may know all—"

Slowly the flickering pulse in the old hag's wrist grew stronger and at last she opened her deeply buried eyes and riveted them upon those who had waited breathless for this moment.

Both Jack and his friend Habberton saw that the Ace of Diamonds had disappeared from the old woman's forehead and this was another bit of mystery. It had faded in a manner unknown to them and they had not even witnessed its departure.

"What happened?" asked Habberton when the light of sanity seemed to have come back to old Drusilla's eyes.

"What? How should I know?" and she laughed in a way that caused the new heir to grit his teeth.

"Ha! ha! It was the old master I was just coming out o' Janus' room when—but

In times of peace, Uncle Sam prepares for war, but sometimes he buys more than the Army actually needs. At such times the Government holds a Sacrifice Army Sale to dispose of the surplus, and the buyer who is on the spot with the ready cash to pay for these big lots is the one who secures enormous bargains. We had the money.

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Recently, we were so fortunate as to buy up an immense quantity of Army Supplies from the U. S. War Department at a price that does not begin to cover actual cost of manufacture. Below are a few of the rare bargains which we are able to offer our customers. Complete list of hundreds of articles to be sacrificed—free on request.

Carbine Scabbards, 75c
Made for U. S. Calvary at U. S. Arsenal of heavy blocked saddle leather. 31½ inches long, will carry most any size gun. Have straps which may be adjusted to sling over shoulder or adjust to saddle. Cost the government more than $4 to manufacture; our price, only 75c.

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Brand new, elegant tan canvas uppers, tan leather tips, laceband. Durable, stylish, perfect fit. All men's sizes. 95c A great bargain at $1.75—Our Sacrifice Price only 95c.

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New, made of selected long, light cork, covered with fine khaki drill. Ventilator on top can be unscrewed and gilt spike inserted; all sizes. At less than manufacturer's cost. Regular retail price $1.50 each; our price only 45c each. White Cork Helmets, 40c.

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Best web. Holds 50 rounds any size cartridges — in ordering mention size of cartridge used. Brass loops adjustable fastenings. Strong and serviceable, only 15c. U.S. Army Blue Web Belts, brand new, highly polished brass U. S. Belt Buckle, splendid value, only 75c. All Leather Belts, new, only 25c.

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Made from strong, durable waterproof canvas—11 inches deep, 11½ inches wide. Used by the U. S. Army in carrying water. When not in use can be folded and makes very small parcel. Is made to stand rough usage. Made so strong that you can carry coal just as well as water 'round the farm. Have seen service. Our price 65c.

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Made at the U.S. Arsenal of finest quality government leather; will hold 20 rounds of ammunition; lining and cartridge compartments all of the best quality canvas; best in service—price 25c, great bargain. Seen service.

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Can be used as Shot Gun

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Can be used as Shot Gun

5-Shot Hammerless Repeating Army Rifle WORTH $30.00 **Only $2.95**
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[illegible] back if desired

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United States Army Felt Hats
New 95c
Easily Worth $4 to $5
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Don't Pass This Wonderful Hat Bargain!

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Be good or some one will tell the truth about you.

And many a woman can't see a joke who is married to one.

Hate is an unreliable comet; but love is a star forever fixed!

Many a bad husband at home is a "good fellow" downtown.

But the self-made man never neglects to worship his creator.

Occasionally a man grasps an idea that is difficult to let go of.

A man is seldom disappointed in love—until after he gets married.

It is a bright idea to find out in advance what a candidate stands for.

It takes as much courage to do some other things as it does to fight a lion.

If you are perfectly miserable your enemies have no cause for complaint.

Don't you wish you were half as important as you think folks think you are?

Col. Roosevelt has overlooked more opportunities to talk about the weather than any other American.

People have such a habit of crowding around a broken-down automobile as if they were glad of it.

The blue devils are worse cowards than coyotes. They'll wheel and run if you point a corn-cob pipe at them!

New York now has a population of 4,766,883. To think that there are that many people who know no better!

The dictum that every effect must have an adequate cause is hard to apply in the case of some masculine vanity.

The total frontage of Greater New York upon the water is 444.80 miles. Of this, 125.10 miles is available for shipping.

An Ohioan has patented a device to turn automobile lamps with the wheels to illuminate the roads in rounding corners.

Other aviators may get the records, but the Wrights are getting the royalties—and if that isn't aeronautical success, what is?

We have got so we can contemplate with resignation the prospect that Uncle Joe Cannon will not again be Speaker of the House.

"Who rules America?" asked a frenzied muckraker. We name no names, but infer that the real ruler of America wears a hobble skirt.

Mister Habit is a mild, affable chap till he "gets you." What a cruel, crushing, relentless tyrant he becomes when he does "get you!"

A good many of the old, tired, world-scarred veterans of the game tell us there is nothing in the drinking business. But most of us know without the old boys' telling!

Vice-President Sherman says that he is not engaged in reading anybody out of the Republican party. Perhaps he is too assiduously engaged in reading the handwriting on the wall.

Depressed by the gray, overhung day, eh? The world's finest climate is that of the Hawaiian Islands. And yet the folks living there become terribly weary of the perennial blue skies and brilliant sunshine.

what am I saying? It was so queer. Poor Janus boy. He won't come back any more. The old master—sure enough it was—"

"The old master is dead," said Habberton in a maze of astonishment. "You saw some one else. What happened when you came out of Janus' room?"

Old Drusilla passed her wrinkled hand across her sallow forehead.

"Was it there, young master?" she inquired looking at Habberton.

"was what there?"

"The sign—the Ace of Diamonds?"

"What if it was?"

"Then I am dead!" and she seemed to lapse into unconsciousness, but Jack shook her back into life.

"I'm dead, I say; dead as Janus ever was," she rattled on. "It is never placed on the forehead of a living person. I saw it on the old master's face in this very room and then Janus wore it, and now I'm dead with it on my forehead."

"Mad as a March hare," said Habberton. "She's the liveliest corpse I ever saw."

"Why don't you bury me?" moaned old Drusilla. "It was the old master for sure—ha! ha! Can't I walk to the tomb myself? Yes, I don't need a priest.—No, no—"

"Worse and worse," said Habberton in tones of genuine disgust. "I shall quit this infernal house at once—"

"Not till we've solved its every mystery," interjected Jack. "Wait! Marie has come back to life."

The white-faced maid was sitting up, silently arranging her disheveled tresses the while she gazed upon the old body on the tiger skin.

Habberton went over to her and took her hands.

"We've found Drusilla," said he. "She isn't dead, but flighty. She raves about the old master, my late uncle!"

"Does she?" and Marie's eyes again sought the same object.

"What did you see in the corridor? Anything but old Drusilla?"

The pallid girl took a long breath and looked away.

"I saw a figure slipping down the passage," she said at last. "It was quite shadowy there, you know. I heard no sound; the figure vanished towards the west wing and then—I discovered Drusilla and raised the alarm."

"What was the flitting figure like?" eagerly inquired Habberton with a sudden glance at Jack.

"I could not see it plainly enough to describe it. It made no noise that I remember and I think it wore white. May I go now? I am all flustrated."

She arose and stepping cautiously around old Drusilla passed out of the room.

Presently Drusilla herself got upon her feet with an effort and signed to follow the maid.

"I walk pretty well for a dead one, don't I?" she chattered. "I don't want an expensive shroud. Anything's good enough for old Drusilla. But the old master! ha, ha! Just like he always was. Good night."

She had disappeared like Marie and again Jack and Habberton were alone.

"It deepens, but it approaches the ludicrous," said Jack who was the first to speak.

"It marvels me," was the reply. "Now, if we could solve Thaddora's fate—"

"Oh," broke in Clawson. "One thing at a time. Let the girl go for the present."

"But she may have become a victim to the machinations of the Indian demons."

"If so she is beyond succor."

"You don't propose to give her up entirely?"

"Not at all. I've got business in the city."

"Now?"

"As soon as I can get there."

"And I am to be left alone to combat the craftiness of Kalmah and his high priests of villainy?"

"Keep a cool head and a watchful eye," admonished Jack. "Old Drusilla's vaporings have given me an idea."

It was with many misgivings that Habberton saw Jack set off under protest and for some time he stood in the middle of the library his face white and drawn and his hands clinched.

"There'll be murder in this house if Kalmah's trail crosses mine," he suddenly exclaimed. "I've got to get some fresh air or I'll suffocate."

Taking his revolver from the drawer in the table he passed into the hall and thence out of the mansion into the open beyond. All at once a thought of the six figures he had seen enter the house by the narrow path upon the occasion of the beacon light in the west wing window flashed across his mind and he hastened toward the spot from which he had discerned the forms.

It was past the midnight hour now and his first glance was upward and towards the window overhead.

A dim light rewarded him and while he looked he saw figures against the curtain. As suddenly the figures vanished and within a few moments he was aware that he was not the only person abroad that night.

Something was moving towards him over the path which led from the outer world and towards the old house. It had to him a weird, ghostly shape and as it advanced Habberton, gripping his weapon with determination, leaned forward.

Nearer and nearer it came, then another similar shape stepped into its tracks until he counted four robed and turbaned shapes gliding Indian like from the house.

"The dark band of fate—the crafty dark skins of the Orient!" passed through Habberton's thoughts. His gorge rose as he watched amid intense silence, and lifting the revolver he covered the foremost one as he threw forward an eager foot.

But why interfere with their mysterious tramp? He thought of Thaddora; he remembered Jack's instructions to keep cool under all circumstances, but here was something to try his nerves.

As he looked the foremost figure vanished, the second seemed to dissolve into mist and in a moment the last had passed out of sight.

Mechanically Habberton glanced towards the main window of the west wing. In the center of the curtain was what at first appeared a dark smudge, but it presently resolved itself into a large diamond-shaped object at sight of which an exclamation fell from the watcher's lips.

The Hindus were gone, the Ace of Diamonds soon disappeared and Habberton raced for the old house.

A wild, eating thought filled his brain. Kalmah was alone in the west wing. His dark compatriots were gone and now he could have it out with the Indian mystifier.

Not only this, but he would know what had become of Thaddora. He would tear the secret from Kalmah's heart even if he lost his own life in the effort and—

He ceased to think in his run down the path and across the porch.

No one blocked his way; he would have swept aside a giant as if he were a child.

Into the house he plunged and made straight for the library. It was flooded with a mellow but permeating light. The soft rays illuminated every corner.

Across the threshold Habberton paused and then recoiled with a cry. The library was already occupied, for at the table in his dead uncle's chair, with all the assurance of the Arch Fiend sat the dark-faced, serpent-eyed, inscrutable Kalmah.

CHAPTER XI.

HABBERTON AND KALMAH.

Words cannot express Habberton's amazement when he found himself face to face with the swarthy disciple of Buddha. The Hindu had ensconced himself in the dead man's chair with all the coolness imaginable and turned upon the new heir a face that was utterably unreadable.

Habberton's first thought was to pounce upon the man and demand of him what he had done with Thaddora, but cooler counsels prevailed.

He advanced, all the time looking Kalmah in the eye, and took another chair from which he could study him without interference.

"The young sahib has been out?" said Kalmah, his voice smooth and exasperating. "Is he in the habit of walking at night?"

"I am in the habit of consulting my moods," was the reply and Habberton wondered how he could control himself in the presence of this oily demon.

He noticed that the long sleeves attached to the Hindu's immaculate habit concealed his hands, but he recalled the one dark hand which held the knife over Thaddora's head on the light-encircled stair.

"The young sahib likes his new home, I trust?"

The Hindu had good control of his English which he spoke with fluency, but for all this each word seemed to sink to the depths of Habberton's soul and thrill every fiber of his being.

"It is a home for which I did not ask," he said. "You know how it came into my possession?"

"Through the old master," answered Kalmah with a smile playing with the corners of his lips. "Master Sahib was very kind."

Again there leaped up into Habberton's heart a burning desire to fall upon Kalmah and force from him an acknowledgment of the black arts which he had practiced in the old house. He wanted to tell him that he had seen the six dark figures enter and quit The Larches, that he knew something of the visitation of the Withered Hand in the library and had seen the sign of the Ace of Diamonds.

"He'll lead up to it—perhaps," he thought beating back his desire. "This cool, calculating serpent of India will set a trap to catch himself if I give him time."

But he did not know Kalmah.

"The young sahib never saw the old one?" asked the Hindu, shifting the little feet deftly hidden by his gown.

"I never saw my uncle."

"But he did not forget the young sahib."

"Why he should think of me is past my comprehension," said Habberton, and then he leaned towards the Hindu.

"How long have you lived here?" he asked.

If he expected a start on Kalmah's part he was deceived. The statuesque figure in the opposite chair did not move.

"I have served him a long time," was the answer.

Habberton drew a long breath and resolved to make a home thrust.

"May I ask you—Is it true that after a thousand years the Priest of the Withered Hand shall come back?"

The smile faded from Kalmah's lips and into his eyes darted a look such as Habberton had seen dart up in the orbs of poisonous serpents when irritated.

It died out almost as rapidly as it had appeared.

"Young sahib," said he, "has been reading the prophecies of the mystic books."

"I found that prophecy at any rate," answered Habberton. "Is it true?"

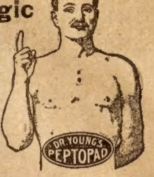
"The words of Buddha never fail."

"Then the Withered Hand has come back?"

"Why not, young sahib?"

Habberton, grating his teeth, rose and stepped to the curtained niche. He knew that the eyes of the Hindu were following his every movement.

He threw up his hand and pulled the



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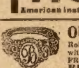

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drapery aside. The portrait of his uncle confronted him. He was half disappointed for he expected to behold the Ace of Diamonds.

Glancing over his shoulder he saw the still immovable figure in the chair.

"It is the face of the old sahib," he heard Kalmah say with scarcely a movement of his lips.

"I know. But tell me why it is not always here. Why does the Ace of Diamonds sometimes appear where the portrait is now?"

"The young sahib has visions."

Habberton dropped the curtain and came back to Kalmah with an oath on his tongue.

"I do not dream. I have seen it with my own eyes!" he cried, looking down into the upturned face. "What infernal hocus-pocus do you practice under my roof?"

For the first time the Hindu stirred.

The crossed hands fell apart, the legs uncoiled and the next moment Kalmah stood before him like a statue.

"The young sahib," cried he, "is a fool!"

"Perhaps," said Habberton bitterly, and then he advanced till he could have touched the Hindu. "What have you done with the young woman?—you and your rascally companions?"

Kalmah stepped back and his face seemed to change color. He folded his arms and gazed intently at Habberton amid the most intense silence.

"Answer me!" almost roared the new heir, "answer me, I say, or by the living God! I'll crush every bone in your body!"

His rage was now uncontrollable. He forgot the craftiness, the devilish arts of the Hindus, he forgot that he was alone with a past master of demonism, but the next moment he had cause to remember.

One of Kalmah's hands was suddenly lifted to his forehead and the turban was swept to the floor. He saw the shaven skull glistening like a dome above the snaky eyes and on that skull stood out the Ace of Diamonds.

"I see!" cried Habberton. "You admit that you make that sign upon the brows of your victims. But, scoundrel, I fear it not. This house is mine. I am master here and yonder is the door which for you leads into eternal exile.'

A laugh so devilish and cool that it drove a fear to the heart of Habberton rippled over the Hindu's lips.

"Kalmah departs not at the whim of the mad young sahib," he said. "He remains till he cares to go."

"Say you so, eh?" exclaimed Habberton. "You taunt me too far. There is a limit to human endurance. Tell me what you have done with the young girl—with Thaddora."

"She is a priestess of the Withered Hand."

"It's a lie! a lie as black as the heart from which it springs!" was the retort. "Where is Thaddora?"

Habberton rushed forward with the last word. He threw out his hands to clutch the throat of the dark-skinned villain, but the next moment he recoiled.

A strange mist seemed to float before his eyes. He felt his heart grow cold in an instant and the room swam in Arctic darkness. Something seemed to clutch his throat though no hands were there; he gasped like a man on the verge of suffocation, he struggled, writhed with the Unseen and knew nothing more.

When he came to himself he was in the little bed-chamber which he had chosen some time before.

The light of another day streamed in at the narrow old-fashioned window and fell cold across his face.

Outside a light wind stirred the boughs of the tall and gloomy larches and in one of them a robin was singing. Habberton went to the window and looked out.

Slowly the last events in his life's history came back to him, somewhat disconnected it is true, but they came back all the same.

What had become of Kalmah? Why did not Jack return and where was Thaddora?

Summoning all his mental and physical powers to his assistance Habberton started towards the door. In another second he was in the corridor beyond.

But little light entered this passage and consequently it was dim.

"The west wing!" he cried in his madness. "I'll have it out now or never with that high priest of demonism."

He raced down the passageway, past the head of the staircase, on, on till he was stopped by a human body which lay crosswise of the corridor.

Seeing that it was a female figure he halted with an ejaculation and lifted it in his arms.

With the word "Thaddora!" on his lips he ran back to his own room where there was light and threw open the door.

He rushed to the window and then looked at his burden.

"Old Drusilla!" he cried in a voice of disgust. "If she is not dead she may know—she may tell."

The little eyes unclosed, he saw the lips part in a deeply drawn sigh, but that was all.

"Curses on the fiends!" he exclaimed as he cast the scarcely breathing form upon his own bed and in another second he was racing down the corridor once more.

All at once he stopped and gazed ahead. In an instant as it were his senses came back to him. He was pitting his powers against the all-powerful work of a prince of darkness and, feeling this, he leaned against the wall and shuddered with horror.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. POLLY'S EXPERIENCE.

During a part of the time covered by the foregoing events in the old house at the end of Pomeroy street Jack Clawson was in the city closeted with a little thin-faced man. This individual was Phineas Polly of the legal firm of Polly & Jolly, well known solicitors.

Jack had aroused Mr. Polly from his virtuous slumbers and had brought him down to his office for a conference.

"So you are Mr. Clawson?" said the little attorney, as if he had heard the name before. "I cannot recollect ever having met you before this, but the name sounds familiar."

"We'll just skip all familiarity as to cognomens," replied Jack. "I have just come from The Black Larches. I understand that you were the late Mr. Timpson's counselor."

"I was."

"And you drew up the will by which his nephew, Delos Habberton, inherits the estate."

"Yes and the young man, I believe, has taken possession of his fortune."

"He's ensconced there right enough," said Jack, a smile playing with his lips. "I have come to ask you about the late Tinus Timpson."

"Go ahead, but I can't see why I had to be routed out of bed to give you information about my late client."

"I'll assume all responsibility. You, of course, knew your client very well?"

"As the average lawyer knows his clients. I can't say that Mr. Timpson was given to self exploitation."

"No? Are you aware that he was a disciple of the occult, in other words, Mr. Polly, did you know that he had a library of strange books dealing with the mysteries and darknesses of the Burman religion?"

"The fact was not unknown to me," was the reply.

"And his Hindu friend Kalmah?"

"That sleek rascal?" laughed Mr. Polly. "Is he in the house yet?"

"Yes, he seems to be a permanent fixture," smiled Jack.

"Well, what is the new heir going to do?—kick him out?"

"That depends, but I don't think Kalmah will long remain where he is. What would you do, Mr. Polly?"

"I—don't—know," said the little lawyer deliberately. "I don't like these dark-skinned people."

"Nor I. But that is not what I'm coming to. In what frame of mind was Tinus Timpson when you drew up his will?"

"As near right as one can be who inhabits a house with such a man as the Hindu. He didn't like to give his nephew a single dollar, in fact he deliberately told me so. It was a singular hour I passed with him while drawing up his last will and testament. Do you know what he said after he had signed the document?"

"No."

"Well, he leaned back in the chair and said there'd be one fool less inside of a year."

"What did he mean?"

"I didn't press him for an explanation," smiled the lawyer. "He remarked that he was leaving his sister's son all the trouble he possibly could, that between the Ace of Diamonds and Kalmah—whatever he meant by those words, his very own—Delos Habberton would wish he had never been born."

"He really said that, did he?"

"Yes and the saying seemed to give him exquisite pleasure. I never had a client like him."

"When he died—"

"I know what you are going to say," interjected Mr. Polly. "He must have adhered to the will, for he sent me no word to change or destroy it."

"But where did Tinus Timpson run across that little fakir?"

"There you have me," laughed Polly. "But I had an encounter with that fellow—once, but it was enough."

"Ah!" ejaculated Jack.

"It was about two months before the old man died," pursued the lawyer. "I happened to be in Pomeroy street and near its terminus. I took a notion to pay my client a visit. It was late in the day and, as you know if you have ever visited The Black Larches, night seems to come soon in that locality. I approached the house with a good deal of trepidation and rang the doorbell. The door was opened by the strange being whom you call Kalmah. He did not speak, but led me into the library and left me there. The room was untenanted except by myself and I waited for my old client to put in an appearance.

"Instead of seeing him enter the room Kalmah came back and posted himself in front of me where he stood a statue of darkness and Oriental cunning without speaking a word. It was the most singular experience of my life. I became nervous, not to say uneasy before those dark penetrating eyes which for all the world resembled those of the serpents' I have seen at the Zoo. Half an hour passed in this look and cross-look. All the while Kalmah never moved a muscle. I felt all my courage ooze out at my finger tips. I wished myself back in my office, in Asia—anywhere. At last I picked up nerve enough to get upon my feet. I demanded to know where Tinus Timpson was. The dark lips did not separate. I went to the door. The devilish eyes followed me. I seemed suddenly to become the victim of some mesmeric power. All volition deserted me. I could neither move nor speak. I was as dead as I will be when they nail me down in my coffin."

Mr. Polly paused and looked around the room as if he expected again to undergo the terrible experience he was relating.

"How long did this strange affair last?"

"I don't know, really I don't. I know it was not over till the Hindu seemed to fade from my vision as if in a mist. When I came back to myself I made haste to quit the premises. I stayed not upon the order of my going, but got out of the infernal presence as rapidly as possible. It was my first and last visit to The Black Larches."

"Then you did not attend the funeral of your client?"

"Heavens no!" cried Mr. Polly. "He was buried from the house and nothing could have induced me to cross that threshold again."

"But he really died?" asked Jack.

"I—think—so," said the little lawyer slowly. "I am informed that the burial permit was granted and they don't grant such things for the living, you know."

Jack Clawson smiled. It was a strange; uncanny subject.

"Is that all, Mr. Clawson?" asked the lawyer.

"Almost," answered Jack. "You know nothing about Mr. Timpson's servants?"

"Nothing except the mentioning of them in the will. He left them all small sums. Let me see. I have the memoranda here," and Polly raised the lid of a very old-fashioned desk and fished among a lot of papers in the pigeonholes. "Here it is. Their names are Drusilla, Janus and Marie."

"Nothing for Kalmah?"

"His name doesn't appear."

"Nor Thaddora?"

"Wait. Here's a second paper. He told me that he left one Thaddora to the needs and purposes of "the second coming" whatever that means."

(Continued on page twelve.)

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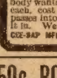

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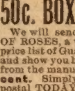

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First Farmer—I have jes' been lectured by that good-lookin' young woman with glasses fur spoilin' the color scheme of the garden by puttin' paris green on the vegetables.

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

Rough on Reggie.

Cholly—I spoke a good word for you. Among other things I said you had a little saved up for a rainy day.

Reggie—What did she say?

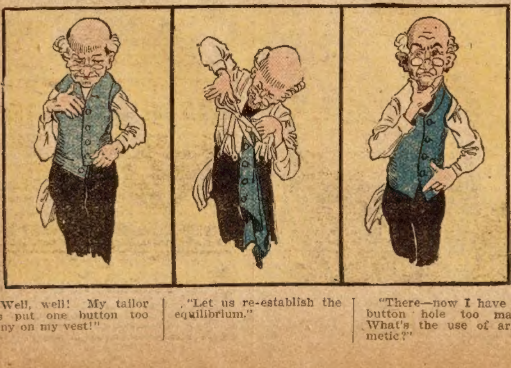
Cholly—She said you didn't know enough to come in when it rained.

Mrs. Partington's Rival.

Mr. Binks (in art museum)—I didn't know you were such an admirer of curios, Mrs. Blunderby.

Mrs. Blunderby—Oh, yes, indeed. I just delight in iniquities.

THE EXTRA BUTTON.



"Well, well! My tailor has put one button too many on my vest!"

"Let us re-establish the equilibrium."

"There—now I have one button hole too many! What's the use of arithmetic?"

Just Like a Man.

She—I don't see why you should hesitate to marry on $2,000 a year. Papa says my gowns never cost more than that.

He—But, my dear, we must have something to eat.

She (petulantly)—Isn't that just like a man? Always thinking of his stomach.

Use for Him.

Magnate—I want to make use of your valuable services.

Young Lawyer—What can I do for you?

Magnate—A competitor is about to bring an action for damages against me, and I want you to get them to engage you as their counsel.

Very Long Ones.

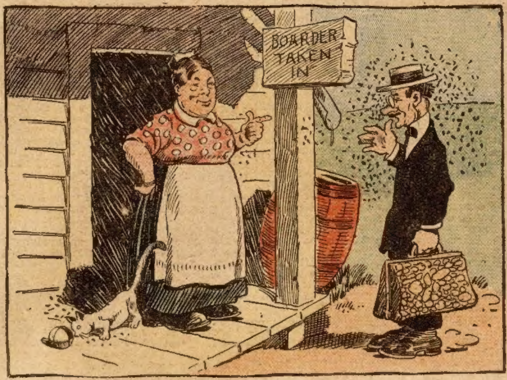
Miss Sweet—Let me see, I want 100 sheets of note paper and—well, how many envelopes should I get?

Clerk—If you want them to write to your sweetheart I think half a dozen envelopes will be enough.

PLEASANT ABOUT IT.

A speeding auto on poor Meek
A shower of street mud hurled;
Said he: "How hard it is to keep
Unspotted from the whirled!"

DAY BOARDERS.



Resorter—Do you have these flies here all the time.
Mrs. Pumphandle—No, sir. They only eat here; they room in the barn.

Easy to Take.

Josh—You say he expects to make barrels of money this season? What is he going to do?

Bosh—Take summer boarders at a dollar a dozen.

Josh—Preposterous! How could any one make money taking boarders at such a price as that?

Bosh—Easily. He's the village photographer.

Desperate.

Maud—George, you must go at once. If you love me fly, and do not let father discover your presence!

George—Oh! my darling, what serpent has entered our Eden to wreck our happiness? Speak!

Maud—Father just got the gas bill!

The Mean Thing.

Mabel—What a perfectly exquisite hat, dear!

Ethel—Oh, I'm glad you like it. I was so afraid you wouldn't.

Mabel—Yes; I always did adore that shape. Why, I had three just like it when it was in fashion.

His Interest.

Mrs. Newlywed—You are not a bit interested in my new dress.

Mr. Newlywed—Indeed, I am! How many hooks has it?

The Hobble Skirt.

She—How do you like my new dress?
He—It reminds me of a popular theater.
She—What do you mean?
He—Standing room only.

The Jersey Brand.

Hodge—Were the mosquitoes big out there?

Dodge—Big? Why, when one entered the house, it set off the burglar alarms.

Unapproachable.

Tall Student—Your father is touchy, isn't he?

Short Student—No; that's the trouble. You can't touch him at all.

How to Get Rid of Catarrh.

A Simple, Safe, Reliable Way, and It Costs Nothing to Try.

Those who suffer from catarrh know its miseries. There is no need of this suffering. You can get rid of it by a simple, safe, inexpensive, home treatment discovered by Dr. Blosser, who, for over thirty-five years, has been treating catarrh successfully.

His treatment is unlike any other. It is not a spray, douche, salve, cream, or inhaler, but is a more direct and thorough treatment than any of these. It cleans out the head, nose, throat and lungs so that you can again breathe freely and sleep without that stopped-up feeling that all catarrh sufferers have. It heals the diseased mucous membranes and arrests the foul discharge, so that you will not be constantly blowing your nose and spitting, and at the same time it does not poison the system and ruin the stomach, as internal medicines do.

If you want to test this treatment without cost, send your address to Dr. J. W. Blosser, 27 Walton Street, Atlanta, Ga., and he will send you by return mail enough of the medicine to satisfy you that it is all he claims for it as a remedy for catarrh, catarrhal headaches, catarrhal deafness, asthma, bronchitis, colds and all catarrhal complications. He will also send you free an illustrated booklet. Write him immediately.

Wanted to Know.

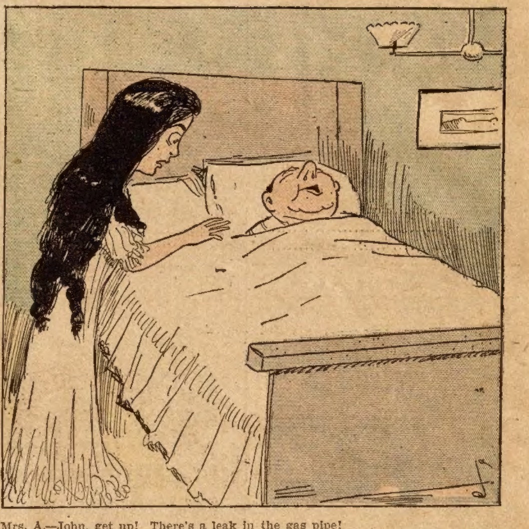
Mr. Hyson—I've resigned my position.
Mrs. Hyson (cynically)—Before or after?
Mr. Hyson—Before or after what?
Mrs. Hyson—You were fired.

A War Veteran.

Miss Swift—Did you have no fear of death when in battle?

The Sergeant—No; I was an immune; I had been a baseball umpire.

ALL FIXED.



Mrs. A.—John, get up! There's a leak in the gas pipe!
Mr. A. (sleepily)—M-m-m! Wha's that ? Leak in th' gas pipe? Well, jus' put a pail under it an' go t' bed. (Snore!)

Hired Her for a Change.

Mr. Naggitt—You'll have to discharge that cook.

Mrs. Naggitt—Why?

Mr. Naggitt—She's getting into your way of cooking.

The Advantage.

Mrs. Flyabout—I believe you love that pipe more than you do me, your wife.

Mr. Flyabout—Well, you see, I can keep my pipe from going out.

Unkind Enough.

Ella—I expect to visit the scenes of my girlhood.

Stella—Going to some buried city?

How It Was.

"Broke? Been playing the wrong horses?"

"No; I played the right horses, only I played them on the wrong day."

Historical.

"Mrs. Green and Mrs. Smith came in before sunrise today and settled their bills."

"Ah, indeed," laughed the fat grocer. "Well, I always was interested in the early settlers."

Way of the World.

Willie—Say, pop, I'll be awful glad when I get old enough to do as I please.

Mr. Henpeck—Yes, and when you reach that age it's ten to one you'll get married and not do it.

Reciprocity.

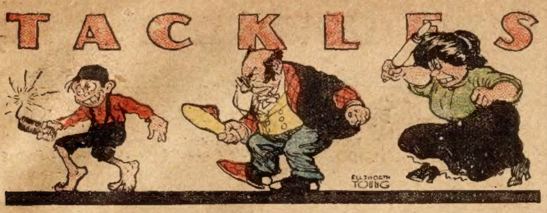
"I suffer a great deal from dyspepsia."

"So do I, but I suffer most when my husband has it."

Not on Your Life!

"Can a woman live down a mistake?"

"Not if it's made in our bridge club."



DAME NATURE HINTS.

When the Food Is Not Suited.

When Nature gives her signal that something is wrong it is generally with the food. The old Dame is always faithful and one should act at once.

To put off the change is to risk that which may be irreparable. An Arizona man says:

"For years I could not safely eat any breakfast. I tried various kinds of breakfast foods, but they were all soft, starchy messes which gave me distressing headaches. I drank strong coffee, too, which appeared to benefit me at the time, but added to the headaches afterwards. Toast and coffee were no better, for I found the toast very constipating.

"A friend persuaded me to quit the old coffee and the starchy breakfast foods, and use Postum and Grape-Nuts instead. I shall never regret taking his advice. I began using them three months ago.

"The change they have worked in me is wonderful. I now have no more of the distressing sensations in my stomach after eating, and I never have headaches. I have gained 12 pounds in weight and feel better in every way.

"Grape-Nuts make a delicious as well as a nutritious dish, and I find that Postum is easily digested and never produces dyspepsia symptoms."

"There's a reason."

Get the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

Sanguine.

She—Is Mr. Jones an optimist?

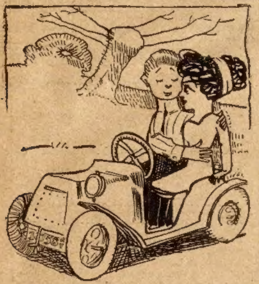
He—Is he? I should say so. He found a ticket for a chance in an automobile raffle the other day and now he's building a garage.

Correct.

"Yes, I am building a beautiful house for my son."

"Ah! I see—a sort of heir-castle."

He Followed Her.



They were autoing through a deep wood, and he had told her of the robbers that used to be there.

"What a romantic place to be held up in!" exclaimed the maiden. Then he held her up.

FREE ASTHMA CURE.

D. J. Lane, a chemist at 115 Lane Building, St. Mary's, Kansas, manufactures a remedy for Asthma in which he has so much confidence that he sends a $1 bottle by express to anyone who will write for it. His offer is that he is to be paid for it if it cures, and the one taking the treatment is to be the judge.

Unfortunate Climax.

Bob Footlite—Failure? I should say it was. The whole play was ruined.

She—Gracious! How was that?

Bob Footlite—Why, at the end of the last act a steam pipe burst and hissed me off the stage.

Two Varieties.

"My husband told me a barefaced lie this morning."

"The lie my husband told me had whiskers on it."

Needed Change.

Miss Rich—I wish you wouldn't take my refusal so to heart.

Mr. Poor—I don't. I take it to pocketbook.

A CHANCE TO MAKE MONEY.

Many Americans are taking up the 5-acre fruit tracts and city lots now being offered free in Mexico. The only requirements are to have fruit trees planted within 5 years. Even the planting and care of the trees will be done on shares for those who can't go or do not care to go. The fruit grows bountifully and matures lusciously and commands very high prices. The Jantha Plantation Co., Section 593, Pittsburg, Pa., is the U. S. office for receiving applications. Particulars on request.

In the Wild West.

The Tenderfoot—Ah, well, as Shakespeare says "What's in a name?"

Alkali Ike—Call me one that I don't like and I'll show you.

Would Get It Back.

The Doctor's Wife—Two dollars and a half for ten blocks! Gracious! This taxicab company knows how to charge.

The Doctor—That's all right, my dear. The president of the company is a patient of mine.

Heroism.

"Averted a tewibble twagedy just now."

"Gwacious! How?"

"Man said he'd bwain me if I didn't give him a dollah. I gave him a dollah."

Very.

Mrs. Rasper—Is she economical?

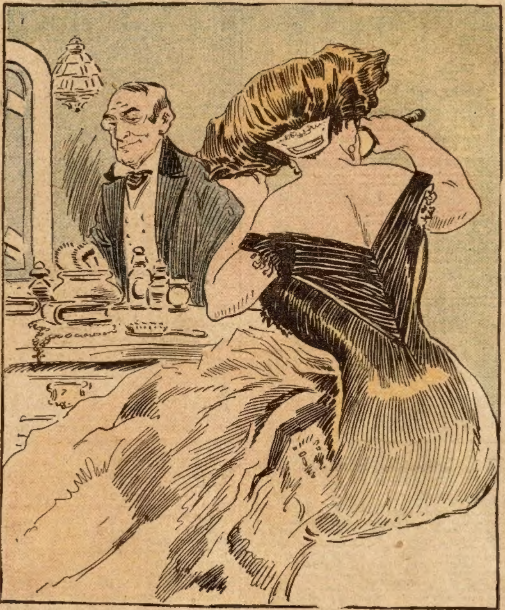
Mrs. Wasper—Well, she's saving her wedding dress for a possible second marriage.

The Pets!

He—It's quite true that there are microbes in kisses——

She—Oh, the sweet little darlings.

ENEMIES NOW.



Leading Lady—Mr. Joshington said my face was a poem!
Comedian—Yes? Perhaps he couid tell by the lines.

No, Indeedy.

Country Girl—Yes, that's lover's leap. Many a disappointed lover has jumped over there. Do you love me enough to do that?

City Admirer—What! And leave you to some other fellow?

Must Be Boss.

He—Won't you be my partner for life?

She—Will you incorporate and give me controlling interest?

Always Changing.

"Pop, who's the President of Peru?"

"How do I know, son? They change 'em every fifteen minutes or so down there."

The First Qualification.

First Musician—What makes you think that man would make a great grand opera impresario? Does he know much about music?

Second Musician—No, but he's a wonderful financier.

The Modern Sequel.

She—And so finally they were married?

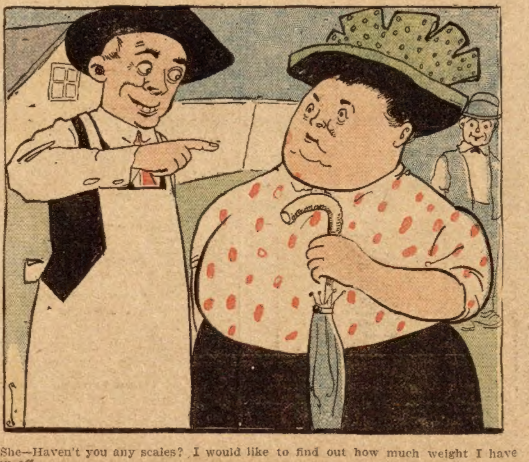
He—I know the rest. They afterward get a divorce and live happily to the end.

Eh?

"I came from a very good family."

"They must have been pleased."

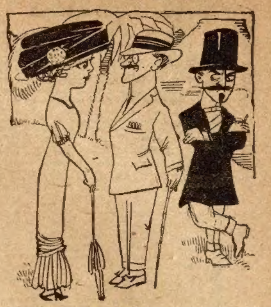
DAMP PROOF.



She—Haven't you any scales? I would like to find out how much weight I have taken off.

He—We have no scales, but you go and stand on the bridge over the brook there; if it breaks down under you, you weigh at least 300.

Dreadful Affair.



Miss Sassissitz—How did the baron's duel with the count come out?

Mr. Veracity—He lost the end of his mustache, one eyelash and his temper, and the count lost his hat.

AGENTS WANTED

AGENTS HERE IT IS 200% PROFIT

Handy Hame Fastener

A new invention to take the place of the old-time strap. Fastens instantly with gloves on. Works automatically. Don't freeze your fingers on cold days. Every horse owner wild about them. Fits any hame. No straps or buckles. Snaps in place instantly. Outwears the harness. Money back to any customer not pleased.

Write today for FREE SAMPLE You will make more money than ever before. Agents say stock sold out before fairly get started. Thomas Mfg. Co., 517 Wayne St., Dayton, Ohio.

LEARN to make Mirrors and make big money at home Partic. for stamp. MacMasters, D36, Peru, Ind

AGENTS, CREDIT, Perfumes, Flavors, etc. Big profits. Express Paid. Terms Free. HERBENE AGENCY Co., Box 282, Sta'n L, New York

AGENTS $36 A WEEK EXPENSES PAID. No experience or capital required, 30 days credit; photo pillow tops 50c; enlarged portraits, bromides, paintings, frames; lowest prices; samples and catalogue free. Dept.Z. Hitter Art Studio, Chicago, Ill.

TOBACCO FACTORY WANTS SALESMEN. Good Pay. Steady Work and Promotion. Experience unnecessary as we give Complete Instructions. Piedmont Tobacco Co., Bx.B14, Danville, Va.

AGENTS PORTRAITS 35c, FRAMES 15c. Sheet Pictures 1c, Stereoscopes 25c, Views 1c. Thirty Days' Credit. Samples and Catalog Free. CONSOLIDATED PORTRAIT, Dept. 4157, 1027 W. Adams St., CHICAGO

AGENTS WANTED—GENTLEMEN OR LADIES—To sell a Patent Cork Puller; something new. Sells to every house. Liberal offer. HAWLEY MFG. CO., Stepney Depot, Conn., Dept. A.

DON'T ACCEPT an agency until you get my samples and particulars. MONEY MAKERS. Address SAYMAN, 604 Sayman Building, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS WANTED in every town in U. S.; sell made-to-measure Worsted Trousers. Only tailoring concern in country weaving cloth. Write COLONIAL WORSTED MILLS, Lawrence, Mass.

PORTRAIT AGENTS

Write for our new price list on portraits and frames. It will pay you. A. K. Ziskind, 600 New Era Bldg., Chicago

AGENTS NINE IN ONE $75 monthly. Combination Rolling Pin. Nine articles combined. Lightning Seller. Sample free. FORSHEE MFG. CO., Box 408 Dayton, O.

AGENTS CREDIT HANDKERCHIEFS Represent a big manufacturer. Easy work. Fine line of Dress Goods, etc. Free Samples. Stamp brings particulars. MAKE $10 A DAY Freeport Mfg. Co., 80 Main St., Brooklyn, N.Y., Dept.52.

Make Your Own Repairs! Mends Harness, Shoes, Canvas. Myers' Sewing Awl makes lock-stitch like sewing machine. $1 postpaid. BIG MONEY FOR AGENTS. C. A. MYERS CO. 6338 Lexington Ave., Chicago, Ill. The Awl for All.

Live Agents Wanted

Hustlers to handle our attractive combination packages of soap and toilet articles with valuable premiums. One Michigan agent made $65 in 47 hrs., another $21 in 6 hrs., another $22.50 in 10 hrs. Write today. E. M. DAVIS SOAP CO., 1472 Carroll Ave., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS My Sanitary Coffee Maker produces pure, sweet coffee needs no settler and never wears out. Saves coffee, money and health. Every wife buys at sight; new invention; exclusive territory. Send 15c. for 50c. size, postpaid. DR. LYONS, 429 Day St., Pekin, Ill.

AGENT in each county to sell our Aluminum Coffee Maker for 25c. 500 other good sellers. Write quick for territory. Samples free. Freight and express allowances. $100 to $200 per month now being made by Phillips Agents. Proposition free. One of the largest agency supply houses in America. THE PHILLIPS CO. E. Phillips Building, Dayton, Ohio.

Sample Extractor Prepaid Fifteen Cents

MEND THE LEAKS IN YOUR Granite, Tin, Aluminum and Iron Dishes, Kettles Pans, etc., with PECK'S SOFT RIVETS METAL. Anyone can do it. No solder, cement or bolt. Fit any surface. Send for sample box of 25, assorted sizes, 10c postpaid. Regular package 25c. PECK & CO., 230 Main St., Batavia, N. Y. AGENTS WANTED

Salesmen Wanted. Large profits. Make $300 to $500 a month selling Solar Lighting Systems for all purposes. Free Catalog. Write Today. CHICAGO SOLAR LIGHT CO., 208 So. Jefferson St., Chicago, Ill.

MAYR'S WONDERFUL REMEDY
FOR STOMACH TROUBLES
INDIGESTION
GAS ON THE STOMACH AND INTESTINES
THIS REMEDY REMOVES GALL STONES
GEO. H. MAYR. MANUFACTURING CHEMIST
40 DEARBORN ST. CHICAGO.
POWDER No.1
POWDER No.2

$1 Worth of Mayr's Wonderful Stomach Treatment FREE

It is a positive remedy for all Stomach and Liver Trouble, Gastritis, Indigestion, Dyspepsia, Pressure of Gas around the Heart, Sour Stomach, Distress After Eating, Nervousness, Dizziness, Fainting Spells, Constipation, Yellow Jaundice, Sick Headache and Gall Stones.

The above ailments are mainly caused by the clogging of the intestinal tract with **GALL STONES**, backing up poisonous fluids into the stomach, and otherwise deranging the digestive system. I want every sufferer of any of these diseases to test this wonderful treatment. **You are not asked to take this treatment for a week or two** before you will feel its great benefits—**only one dose is usually required.** I say emphatically it is a positive, permanent remedy and I will prove it to you if you will allow me to. I will send the complete $1.00 treatment to sufferers absolutely **FREE** so you can try it in your own home at my expense.

The most eminent specialists declare that 75 per cent of the people who suffer from Stomach Trouble are suffering from **GALL STONES**. I firmly believe that this remedy is the only one in the world that will cure this disease. Sufferers of Stomach trouble and **GALL STONES** should not hesitate a moment, but send for this **FREE** treatment at once. I would be pleased to send you the names of people who state they have been cured of various Stomach ailments and speaking the highest praise of this medicine. Just fill out the Coupon below—let me send you this wonderful treatment together with highly interesting literature, testimonials, etc. Don't suffer with agonizing pains—don't permit a dangerous surgical operation, which gives only temporary relief, when this medicine will permanently help you.

GEORGE H. MAYR, Mfg. Chemist,
40 Dearborn St., Chicago.
References:—Mercantile Agencies or State Bank of Chicago

Sign and Mail This Coupon

GEO. H. MAYR, Mfg. Chemist,
40 Dearborn St., Chicago.
Send me absolutely FREE, $1.00 treatment of Mayr's Wonderful Stomach Remedy.

Name..
Address..
City and State..
Write Plainly.
Express Office.. 8

You are not asked to take this treatment for a week or two before you feel its great benefits. One dose is all that is necessary to prove its wonderful powers to benefit.

Absolutely harmless. Guaranteed by the Pure Food and Drug Act Serial No. 35793

500% PROFIT

Operating a **Daydark Photo Post Card Machine.** Three photo postal cards of any object made and delivered on the spot in ten minutes. No experience required—no dark room necessary. All work done in the machine in open day. Establish a profitable business at home by opening a Daydark Postal Parlor. Big money maker on the street, at fairs, etc. Send at once for free catalog and sample post card showing the fine work the machine does.
Daydark Specialty Co, 456 Temple Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

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EARN ELEGANT WATCH AND CHAIN IN ONE DAY'S WORK

SEND NO MONEY—Simply send your name and address, and we send you, charges paid by us, 12 Beautiful Pictures, 16 inches wide, 20 inches long, no 2 alike, (stores charge $1.00 each for them). With them we send 12 boxes of our famous WHITE CLOVERINE SALVE (in handsome tin boxes), greatest remedy known for Cuts, Sores, Piles, Eczema, Catarrh, Colds, etc.

MEN and WOMEN
EARN $3.00 DAILY

You sell the Cloverine at 25c per box and give one picture free. When sold return money and we send beautiful watch and chain, or you can keep cash commission. Be first in your town. Every one buys two to three boxes after you show pictures. A doctor discovered Cloverine. Millions use it. Agents earn $3.00 a day sure. Write quick. We send Cloverine and pictures at once. Address
WILSON CHEMICAL CO., Tyrone, Pa. Dept. 122

$1.00 A MONTH BUYS THIS SEWING MACHINE.

We will sell you a high-grade, drop-head, Sew Easy Sewing Machine for $1.00 a month. We guarantee each machine for Ten years. We ship direct from the factory. We do not sell to stores and we have no agents. We can save you fully one-half. You get the machine at once and use it while you are paying for it and it only costs you about 3 cents a day. We have many special features in our machine such as short needles which don't break easily. Our shuttles hold half again as much thread as the old spring tension shuttle. We can't tell all the good points in this advertisement, and we couldn't afford to send you a machine on the small dollar a month plan unless we gave big value and low prices. We want you to write us today, saying: "Please send me circulars and full particulars about your 'dollar a month' Sewing Machine offer."

FACTORY PRICES

SAVE FULLY ONE HALF

Write Today. Address **SHEFFIELD MFG., CO.,**
Dept. 5, 1421 Olive Street, St. Louis, Mo

EXPRESS PRE-PAID
STRAIGHT KENTUCKY WHISKEY
ELK SIDE
AGED IN BOND
100 PROOF
STRAIGHT KENTUCKY WHISKEY
GUARANTEED BY US UNDER NATIONAL PURE FOOD LAW JUNE 30 1906
IMPERIAL DIST. CO
KANSAS CITY MO.

12 Full Bottles ELK SIDE Straight Kentucky Whiskey →100 PROOF← $4.50
Express Charges Prepaid

This offer is bringing us thousands of new regular whiskey customers, for never before in the history of the whiskey business has it been equaled. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. We want to prove to you what a rich, pure and delicious whiskey this really is.

Send us $4.50 and we will at once send **12 Full 16-oz. Bottles** of our pure, mellow 100-Proof Straight **ELK SIDE KENTUCKY WHISKEY, express prepaid,** guaranteed by us under the National Pure Food Law and pronounced by competent judges to be the finest, the most wholesome and most delicious whiskey ever distilled. Remember this is not a blend, compound or imitation, but a **pure, straight, 100-Proof** whiskey and guaranteed so. This is the same fully matured whiskey which is so highly recommended by physicians for medicinal purposes on account of its purity and full strength. No better whiskey to be had.

After you receive the whiskey and drink one full bottle and put it to any test you desire, if you do not say that it is the finest whiskey you ever tasted, regardless of price, you may return the other eleven bottles and we will promptly refund your money without a question. Remember, we guarantee every bottle of **Elk Side Whiskey** to be 100-Proof. It is not the weak, watery kind, but is of full strength. All shipments made same day order is received. Make remittance payable to

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INDIANA, INDIANA COUNTY, PA

Frank Doulton at Sea;

Or, Meeting Wild Adventures

By FRANK E. CHANNON

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Begun in No. 38, Sept. 17. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW far now before we strike the Duke path?" inquired Jerry, looking above anxiously at the lowering clouds.

"It isn't far now," reassured his brother; "close up both of you; the mist is coming down on us and we had better keep together." The three lads came within touching distance of each other and continued on their way.

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"It isn't far now," reassured his brother; "close up both of you; the mist is coming down on us and we had better keep together. The three lads came within touching distance of each other, and continued on their way.

"I suppose you know the way?" questioned Frank, somewhat anxiously.

"Oh, I know the way all right, but I'm worried about the mist; it's coming down on us," answered Sam.

Like a mighty gray mantle the mountain cloud enveloped the three climbers. So thick was it that Frank, who was the last, could scarcely see Sam, only a few paces in front.

"Why it's worse than a London fog," he cried.

"Hallo!" suddenly shouted Sam, from his position as leader.

"What's the matter?" cried both the rear lads together.

"It stops!"

"What stops?"

"The path; it's come to an end."

Jerry gave an exclamation of dismay, and crept forward on hands and knees towards his brother, Frank close at his heels. "Golly!" he cried; "we've missed it somehow! we're on 'Deadman's Leap'!"

For a moment or so the three lads stood huddled together; scarce knowing what to do. The trail they had been following ceased abruptly; there was a sheer drop into the ocean below. Another foot or so and they had been over.

"Well, what's to be done now?" asked Frank, realizing that there had been a mistake.

"We must get back; we're half a mile too far along; think you can squeeze up against the rock and let me pass; I had better go first."

Frank flattened himself against the solid wall, and Sam and Jerry both passed him. The wind was rising and struck them in heavy gusts, as they turned their faces in the direction they had just come. They struggled on in it's teeth, shuffling along and feeling their way carefully.

"That was a narrow escape," confided Sam to Frank. "I had an idea we were going wrong somehow, and felt carefully where I was going. Another two feet and we had been clear off Deadman's Leap—it's a plumb drop of six thousand feet to the sea."

"I suppose the mist shut out the Dazzle path, but we won't take it anyway now; we had better go back the way we came; it's safer in this fog."

"I can't make out where we are at all," interposed Jerry. "It seems as if we were going up still; we ought to be on the level, not climbing."

They all stopped again, and the two islanders tried in vain to pierce the mist. The rising storm was howling and shrieking around the mountain side. They had to shout now at the top of their voices in order to make themselves heard.

"Come on!" Sam cried, "it's no use staying here; we shall only be blown off into the sea. Come on!"

They struggled on once more in the face of the gale. The fog had been blown away before the wind, but a blinding rain had succeeded it, and the darkness was in-

"Here, crawl in here!" suddenly they heard Sam's voice calling, and next moment there was a sudden cessation of the wind, as they found themselves in a sort of small cave.

"Whew, that was lucky!" exclaimed Sam; "I just happened to notice it; I had almost passed it; we are safe here until the storm passes."

"I wonder where it goes to; I never knew of it before," remarked Jerry.

"Have you never been as far as this," inquired Frank.

"Yes, once before we both came with Uncle Boss; we went right to The Leap, but it was a fine day; I never want to go there again a day like this; I can't think how I missed the Dazzle path."

"Let's crawl back a bit, the rain's beating in here; the wind must have changed again; how it does veer about."

They crawled back some distance into the cavern, which grew larger and larger as they advanced.

"Steady!" cried Frank, "we had better stop, or we shall get lost here; I can't feel the side any more. Have you a match, either of you?"

"No, but I've got my tinder box. Oh, murder; the rain's soaked it; it won't light."

"Hold on, I've some matches," Frank said; "I remember I took some before I left the Homer."

He struck a light, and the walls of the cavern were illuminated; the light but served to make the darkness seem greater; they could not see to the end of their shelter.

"Looks like a big place," observed Sam. "I don't remember hearing of it before; do you, Jerry?"

"I never did," said the brother, shaking his head.

The match flickered and went out; they were in darkness once more.

"How many have you?" asked Sam of Frank.

"There are eight or ten more, I think. I wish we could find something to kindle a fire with, then we could see what we were about."

They were again about to strike a match, when Sam clutched Frank's arm, and Jerry drew back against them both.

"Hush!" whispered the lad; "what's that?"

They all stood staring into the blackness at the far end of the cavern. A tiny spot of red distinctly shone there. It seemed miles away, and yet neither of them could have sworn that it was not close upon them. They stood huddled together, gazing at the mysterious red spot. What was it? From where did it come? Outside they could hear the roaring of the storm, as it swept around the mountain's side. A blinding flash of lightning illuminated for a brief second the blackness of the cave, it was followed instantly by a deafening crash of thunder, and the very rocks seemed to shake. The three boys, clutching at each other in terror, stood peering at the nearing light. It was coming towards them. It was advancing slowly upon them. Was it fancy, or did they really hear a stealthy tread?

"Strike another match," whispered Jerry, as he cowered besides Frank.

"No, let's get out; better out in the storm than in here."

The three began slowly backing away towards the entrance, the light in the distance rapidly advancing upon them. They could now plainly hear the sound of advancing steps.

"Bolt!" whispered Frank, "it's uncanny."

The words had scarce left his lips when there was a shout close at hand; a rush of feet, and next moment he found himself struggling in the grasp of an unseen foe. The cries of Sam and Jerry told him that they were likewise attacked. He struck out right and left, fighting fiercely. Now that he had something tangible to deal with, his fears had vanished, and he fought like a mad cat. Then all at once a heavy cloth enveloped him. His hands were pinioned to his side; a blinding light was flashed in his face for a single instant. Strong hands seized him bodily and he was lifted up like a baby and hurried away. He tried to cry out; a soft substance was stuffed in his mouth; an overpowering sense of fatigue seized upon him, and he knew no more.

It was quite light, and there were voices sounding around him. The light was almost blinding, but he gradually became accustomed to it. He sat up and looked around. What was it? Where was he? Was he dreaming? No, there was Sam and Jerry standing up and speaking to some men only a few feet away. He struggled to his feet, and shading his eyes with his hand to keep off the fierce light, advanced towards them.

"Hallo!" remarked one of the men, looking him over. "So you've come to, have you?"

Frank did not reply; he was scarcely awake yet. His surroundings were so strange that he was dazed.

"Well," the man resumed, "what have you to say for yourself; these lads don't seem to know much."

"Where—where am I?" asked Frank, blankly.

"You're right in the way of Jose, the cook, clear out; he's bringing the grub on and we're hungry."

Frank glanced around and saw a very black man right at his elbow; he carried a large waiter loaded with tempting food.

"I beg your pardon," he said stepping to one side.

The man bowed, as if accepting the apology, and proceeded on his way. He set the tray down at a white-covered table in the center of the room—or was it a room? Frank could not quite determine. Yes, there were walls and a ceiling, but of what were they composed? Long, glistening, inverted pinnacles reached down from the ceiling; the walls gleamed with white and gold. He stared around in utter amazement.

"Well," said the man who had first addressed him, "don't you approve of the decorations?"

Sam and Jerry ran towards their chum. "It's all right," they assured him. "We're inside the mountain; they are not going to hurt us."

"Sit down," said the man, with a kindly tone in his voice. "Sit down and tell me who you are and where you came from—no keep quiet, you boys"—this to the two lads, who began to explain again—"I wish to hear if what he tells agrees with your story."

"What shall I tell?" asked Frank, who scarce knew what was expected of him.

"What's your name?" demanded the man.

"Frank Doulton."

"Where do you come from?"

"I came from England, but I was staying on this island for a time."

"Oh, oh, a little Johnny Bull, eh? Well go on."

"The storm overtook us and we came in this cave for shelter."

"Who sent you?"

"No one sent us; we came ourselves."

"What did you come to this island for; good of your health?"

"No, I came as cabin boy on a ship, and I'm staying here until I'm called for again."

"Fast ship, isn't she?"

"What?" said Frank, looking up in surprise.

"Pretty good! Pretty good!" laughed the man, "you ought to have gone on the stage, youngster."

"I don't know what you mean; it's the truth. I came out here on the brig, 'Homer.'"

"And I say she's a fast sailer. Carries a nice cargo of children's toys, eh?"

"Oh," stammered the lad, beginning to understand the drift of the man's remarks.

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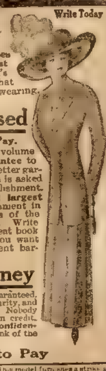

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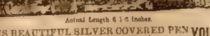

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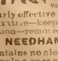

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"Oh," echoed his interrogator, "now you're tumbling, eh?"

Frank was silent. Evidently this man was interested in the brig's strange cargo.

"Well, sit down, I guess you're hungry; we'll talk of it later on," and the man waved his hand towards the table with its steaming contents.

"Will you please tell me why you attacked us in this way?" asked Frank, picking up courage.

"Later on, later on; no hurry."

The three boys and their strange host seated themselves at the table. "Pitch in," invited he.

They required no second invitation; despite their somewhat rough treatment, they were hungry, and did ample justice to the tempting delicacies, with which the table was loaded.

"Now," said the man, as they finished, "I want to tell you boys a few things. By sheer accident you have stumbled in where you really are not wanted—I'm sorry." He pulled at his mustache, as if debating the question. "I'm sorry," he repeated, "but I'll have to keep you all for a time. Board's not very high, so I guess it won't matter much, and you may be useful."

The three lads sat staring at him in open-mouthed wonderment. They waited for him to go on.

"No," he remarked, conclusively, as if he had made up his mind. "No, you can't go back for a time; I'll have to keep you—it can't be helped—I hope you're good lads," and he winked at them, knowingly. Then he struck a big gong which stood on a stand near him. The black man appeared.

"Jose," ordered the strange man. "Take these young fellows and make them comfortable for the night. They're from the hamlet under the hill. I've sent word that they are safe, but we will have to keep them for a time."

The tall black man grinned, and without a word, beckoned the three lads to him, then led them out of the strange room.

Their way led through long passages, apparently carved out of the solid rock; they met several other men, as they passed along, but no attention was paid to them. An appalling silence seemed to reign everywhere. The very fall of their feet was deadened by a deep carpet of sand. Powerful electric bulbs everywhere made the interior of this mysterious mountain palace as brilliant as noontime, and lighted up with magnificent effect the immense stalactites, which descended from the roof. It seemed to the bewildered boys that they were in some enchanted palace, and they were speechless with surprise and awe.

Presently their guide stopped before the doorway of a large aperture on their right, and motioned for them to enter. He nodded his head, and muttered: "Beds; sleep," at the same time flooding the room with light, by the turn of a switch. There was nothing for the three lads to do but to go in.

Their guide smiled and nodded his head again. Then he turned about and left them. The massive wooden door was left wide open. Evidently if they were prisoners, their escape was considered improbable, if not impossible.

They gazed around the room in which they so strangely found themselves. It contained two modern iron beds, several chairs and a small table. An electric wire had been run down one of the mineral formations in the center of the ceiling, and a large bulb shed forth a dazzling light, illuminating every corner of their chamber.

"Well," said Frank, as he looked about their room, "it seems as if at least we have nothing to complain about as regards our sleeping apartment. But where are we? Have you neither been in this place before?"

"Never!" cried the two lads in one breath.

"Or heard about these men before?"

"Never," they echoed again.

"Didn't you know they were on the island?"

"No," cried Sam; "no one knew they were here; how could they get here. There is only one landing that I know of, and that is the three-mile beach; the shore rises right up out of the sea everywhere else; it is impossible for a boat to even get in close on account of the heavy breakers. I can't imagine how they got here. Who can they be?"

"And they have a regular palace down here," joined in Jerry. "What kind of lights have they; they are like the sun."

"Oh, they are electric; did you never see any before?" asked Frank.

Jerry shook his head. "Do they never burn away?" he questioned. "And are they kept in those little glass cases all the time?"

Frank laughed. "I can't explain it to you now," he said, "but I've seen them lots of times before."

"What do you suppose is going to happen to us?" inquired Sam.

"I don't think they intend to hurt us; they seem to treat us kindly, but why are we detained; they must want to keep their presence on this island a secret from your people. I believe they are after the Homer's cargo."

"What, the guns!" cried Sam.

"Yes, the guns."

"But they belong to Captain Hall of the Black Crow, don't they?" said Sam, innocently.

"That's who I am to deliver them to, but there is such a thing as theft in this world, and I believe these people are after these guns all the same."

"I wonder if they can hear what we are talking about; the door's open," said Jerry.

Frank put his head outside. The passage was in total darkness. "I can't see, but I don't hear any one; I think they have gone," he remarked. "I don't care if they do hear. How do you suppose, though, that they are going to let your folks know where we are; he said he had sent word, you know."

Both lads shook their heads. "I'm glad he did, though, all the same, they would have been uneasy over us," said Sam. "Now I vote we turn in and go to sleep; I'm dead tired."

The lads threw themselves upon the beds and were soon sound asleep.

CHAPTER VII.

It must have been about an hour later when a hand lightly touched Frank on the shoulder. He started up. It was dark, for some one had turned off the electric lights.

"Hallo!" cried the boy, sitting up in his bed.

"Quiet!" whispered a voice. "Get up and follow me."

"Who are you?"

"Never mind; do as I say."

Frank considered a second. He thought he recognized the voice from the darkness as belonging to the man who was their host a short time ago. He decided to comply with the order without further objection. He crawled from his bed.

"You need not wake the others; they are tired," the voice remarked, in a whisper. "Put your hand upon my shoulder and follow me; you won't get hurt; you need not fear."

The two silently left the room and turned into the passage. The strange midnight visitor closed the door of the chamber softly behind him. Next moment the passage in which they were was flooded with the brilliant light. Frank turned towards his conductor. He was the man with whom he had dined.

They were out of earshot of the bedroom now, and the stranger said: "Sorry to break up your rest, youngster, but I want to have a talk with you. Come along."

Along the lighted passages he led the boy, until they arrived again at the wonderful room. "Sit down," the man said, and Frank complied. "Now," he resumed, "will you be kind enough to either let me have that invoice of goods, or tell me just how many rifles are in those cases, also if they are Lee-Metfords, or Mauser. I can't quite make out"—he referred to a piece of paper he held.

For a moment Frank was silent, then: "Sir," he said, "I don't know who you are, or what your object is in questioning me, but I can tell you that I have had a trust reposed in me, and—and—I intend to keep it."

A look of admiration crept into the stranger's eyes. "Come," he said, "I like that; it rings true; you're something of a boy. Now, I'll tell you a few things, and then see what you'll say. Listen! This man—the skipper of the brig, who turned these rifles over to you, is a blackguard—he's known all the way from Hong-Kong to Gravesend as that, and Aron Hall's another of the same breed; they're both renegade Britishers, but they're sharp, aye, sharp as Sheffield steel, and Red Pete got away with these rifles from Bristol Docks right under the nose of the British Government. He was out of the Channel before they knew he'd slipped his moorings. Then he fooled and dodged away from a British cruiser—though how the mischief he did it, I don't know"—

"I do!" cried Frank forgetting in his interest of listening to the narrative, that he was the acting agent of this same "Red Pete."

"I guess you do; you were aboard his brig; you ought to," remarked the man.

Frank remained silent. The man resumed:

"He landed his cargo here all right, and Hall thinks the Black Crow is going to pick them up, but I guess he's off there some—the rebs will never see it."

"Who are 'the rebs?'" asked Frank.

"They're a lot of dirty, low-down scamps who think they are going to run things at Rio—they're rebels, boy, rebels against the Brazilian Government, and these rifles were intended for them." Now it doesn't much concern you who I am, but I can tell you right now that I'm here to stop it."

"Are you a Brazilian?" inquired Frank.

"I am an American," said his companion, quietly.

"Then what have you to do with it?"

"That you'll soon find out," snapped the man, sharply. "Now I don't want to shed any blood if it can be helped, least of all the blood of these people here, but I've got to have those rifles, and I'm going to."

He stopped, and looked hard at Frank.

"Well?" challenged the lad.

"It's up to you to help me."

"And suppose I won't?"

"I don't think you are such a fool."

There was a silence for a few moments, then the lad said:

"What do you want me to do; in what way can I help you?"

"First by telling me just how many firearms are in those cases. Next by letting me know the quietest time down in the village, and when I can best get them away without any fuss."

"Why I don't know anything about the place; I only came there twenty-four hours ago."

"I know that, but I can, if I want to, allow you to return and you can come again with the information for me. Oh, I shall keep your two friends here to make sure you do come back," he added, with a significant wink.

"You mean you would harm them if I don't," cried Frank, springing up.

"Easy, easy, boy, you're too darned excited. Take it slow. I shall just keep them as hostages for your good behavior, twig?"

"I do," said Frank, "and I want to tell you I think you're a contemptible cad."

"Well, I'm glad you've got that off your mind if it does you any good," replied the man, coolly, "now then how about the business in hand?"

"I won't do it."

"Come, think again."

"No!" cried the lad, defiantly.

The man leaned back and taking a cigar-case from his pocket, extracted a smoke from it and lighting it, smoked in silence for a time.

"After all," he remarked, "I don't see what a good-looking youngster like you wants to be helping a scamp like Captain Pete for."

"I promised him to turn these cases over to the skipper of the Black Crow when he arrives," said Frank.

"How came you on the Homer?" inquired the man, "you seem like your folks were decent people—you talk pretty good."

"He picked me up in the Channel."

"So, that's how the wind lies, eh? And I suppose you feel some gratitude toward him."

"No, I don't!" cried Frank, almost fiercely, but I gave my word, and I'm going to keep it. He treated me badly enough, but I'll keep my word—I am a gentleman."

Again that look of admiration crept into the man's eyes, and he was about to reply, when there was a sudden interruption.

An electric bell rang loudly. The man leaped to his feet. There was a sound of many feet running towards them. Loud shouts in the passageway, and the next moment the burly form of Mr. G[illegible] burst

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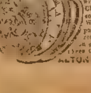

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into the room, at his heels were a dozen men. They swarmed upon the American. He leaped nimbly back; touched a button and the room was in darkness.

For an instant there was a silence, then the clanging of an iron door was heard.

"Quick!" shouted Mr. Glass; "they are getting away from us; strike a light." The words aroused Frank to the pressing necessity of the moment. Next instant a match was flaming in his hand. He noted the electric switch and jumped for it. The apartment was flooded with light once more. All looked around anxiously. The stranger was nowhere to be seen.

"Where are the lads?" cried Mr. Glass to Frank.

"They are safe in the other room—here this way," and he led them down the passage towards the sleeping room he had lately occupied. The noise had aroused the two brothers and they were just emerging from the room as the rescue party met them.

All now scattered around seeking the occupants of this strange mountain stronghold.

"How many men were here?" inquired Mr. Glass of Frank, as they hurried back together towards the room they had just left.

"I saw only five, but there may be more. How did they get here? Where are they?"

"Hold hard!" cried the leader. "Here's the door—why, it's steel!"

They had found the massive door through which the [illegible] of the mountain strangers had evidently vanished and [illegible] stood in their ears.

"Here, here it is!" shouted Glass, "batter it down."

The rest of his companions rushed up, but to batter it down was a different task. It was attacked with crowbar and ax, but with no results. It withstood all their efforts. A hasty examination of the cavern disclosed the fact that all its egresses were stopped in like manner; only the opening into the mountain's side remained open. The men looked at each other in blank dismay. What kind of people were they dealing with? Were they men or wizards? A council of war was hastily held, and it was decided to return to the village for blasting power. As they withdrew, careful note was made of the exact location of this hitherto unknown cave. It was at first suggested that a guard be placed at the mouth to await the return of the party, but no one was found who was willing to undertake this admittedly dangerous job, for who could say but that at any moment the mysterious occupants of the cave might return and attack the guard. So all made their way down the mountain side, just as the first streak of light heralded the approach of the coming day. They reached the village at sunrise, and great was the joy at the deliverance of the three lads, but untold astonishment was expressed when the strange story of the mysterious existence of the mountain cave was related. It was resolved to investigate at once, and a party of twenty men (the entire adult population of the island, with five exceptions) started immediately for the mountain. The two brothers and Frank of course accompanied them.

An hour's climbing brought them once more to the mouth of the cavern. As they made their way there, Mr. Glass explained to the lads how the village had first become acquainted with the news of their capture. When the storm [illegible] the night before every one became uneasy for the safety of the three lads, and as soon as it abated set out with a party to search. They had proceeded but a very short distance when a stone fell at their feet, and attached to it was a letter stating that three lads belonging to their settlement were held in safety in a remote part of the island, and would be liberated in the near future. This letter, written in English, had scarcely been read, when one of the party observed the figure of a man high above them on the mountainside, skilfully making his way along. The hardy, bold mountaineers at once gave chase. The man above soon observed them, and did his best to escape, but surely and steadily the islanders gained on him. When within a hundred yards of him he suddenly disappeared. They scoured the rocks. Not a sign of him could they discover, though they searched high and low. When almost about to give up, Mr. Glass suddenly stumbled right upon the opening to the strange cavern. Their entrance was unchallenged, but a few feet along the passage they came upon the sleeping form of a man. He was overpowered, but unfortunately in the general rush in, they neglected to secure him, and after they had surprised the leader, and recaptured the boys, he was nowhere to be seen; he had escaped.

This was all there was to relate from their standpoint, but the boys were able to enlighten them on many points. Every one was utterly at a loss to account for the presence of the strangers on the island, and the wonders of the cave were quite beyond them.

"But we'll find out," declared Mr. Glass, in a determined tone.

By this time they had once more reached the entrance. It was just as they had left, and no difficulty was experienced in obtaining an entrance. Two men were left at the opening as a guard against surprise, the rest made their way inside. One thing at once attracted their attention. The electric light, which they had left burning, was now out, nor would it respond to the turn of the switch; evidently the wires had been cut or tampered with in some way. It was difficult for Frank to make the islanders understand how this could be, [illegible] to him of course it was easily explainable. Fortunately torches had been brought and their ruddy flame soon lighted up the interior of the cave. Everything was apparently just as they had left it.

"Down with that door, then!" shouted Glass.

This was more easily said than done. The hard steel door was turned by the [illegible] and for a time no progress was made. No lodgment could be made for the charge. It was Frank who suggested that they turn their attention to the rocks. In this they were more successful. Several holes were drilled around the steel door; the charges were placed, the train laid and ignited. Then a general scamper was made for the entrance. In a few seconds a dull roar, a tearing and rending sound, told them that the work was accomplished, and they re-entered. The rocks had been torn asunder and scattered in all directions—the strong door lay battered and prone.

"Slow now!" warned Glass, and very cautiously two or three of the men climbed over the debris, the others, with ready guns, stood covering their advance. On hands and knees Frank crawled after the advance party.

Rocks, rocks, nothing but rocks greeted their eyes. A long passageway, very little higher than the height of a man, lay before them. The end was not in sight. With waving torches the men advanced. Two of their number were left at the entrance, as a further guard against surprises. It was arranged that in the event of anything occurring they were to discharge their rifles as a signal, and the exploring party were to do the same thing.

They had not proceeded very far when it was noticed that the general trend of the passageway was downward, and that it was widening. A hundred yards along and they came upon steps cut out from the [illegible]. A sound of rushing water was borne faintly to their ears. All stopped.

The islanders were a brave but simple-minded race, inclined to be superstitious. The silence and vastness of this strange cave was appalling to them.

"What's the use of going on?" muttered one of them, and several others took up the cry.

"[illegible] Well, sirs!" cried Glass. "You don't mean you're going to stop at this. If there are strangers on this island, I want to know it; those who are afraid can stay back, but I'm going on."

His two nephews, Frank, and a dozen of the more resolute men stood by him, the others were left where they stood, with the understanding that they were to form a further link, and to give the same alarm of a rifle shot if anything demanded the recall of the explorers.

Down the rock-hewn steps the little party advanced, waving their torches high above their heads. The sound of the rushing water sounded nearer and nearer. Its roar now drowned their voices; they had to shout to make themselves heard above the din. They were apparently in a vast hall, neither the sides nor roof of which could be distinguished. The sound of the rushing, subterranean torrent filled the whole vast space. Involuntarily the members of the advance drew closer together, as if seeking mutual protection. Glass, bold and resolute as ever, led the way, torch in hand, vainly striving to pierce the gloom, which the light of his brand seemed only to intensify.

He stopped. "Jacob," he said, "you and the three lads remain here, as a further connection. Have your guns ready, and fire if anything happens."

"Oh, sir!" cried Frank, whose blood was now thoroughly up. "Let me come—do!"

"Come on then, boy—the rest remain."

The continuation of this extraordinary story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. Read it. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year.

* * *

The Withered Hand.

(Continued from page seven.)

Jack bent eagerly forward.

"W[illegible] regarding the will?" he asked.

"No, at the last moment it was left out."

"The old man relented, then?"

"No, he said it was not necessary, for Thaddora, whoever she is—I take it it is a woman's name—would understand."

Mr. Polly folded the papers and threw them back in the desk.

Jack arose and pulled himself together.

"It's a mystery," said he hardly knowing that he had spoken his thoughts. "All the movement seems anchored at The Black Latches just now. Thaddora is there. Kalmah is present with all his machinations and—"

"And the chief legatee is having just what his uncle wanted him to have—all the trouble in the world," grinned the little old lawyer.

"Yes."

"Who is this Thaddora?" questioned Mr. Polly.

"She is a young woman stately in her beauty, intelligent and captivating, but she is in the power of the slaves of craftiness and crimes."

"And what are you going to do, Mr. Clawson?"

Jack drew himself up to his full height and looked down upon the man in the revolving chair.

"I intend to solve the mystery, break the power of Kalmah and his minions and rescue Thaddora!"

"You can have the job, sir!" cried Mr. Polly. "Not for the world would I pit my poor powers against those of a fiend like the Hindu. The legacy is accursed. [illegible] Tharson knew what he was giving to his nephew when he willed him The Black Latches. He knew that he would fall into the traps of Kalmah and all this because he hated his only sister, Mr. Halberton's mother."

"Good night," said Jack as he moved towards the door. "You will hear from me again, Mr. Polly. The powers of Oriental magic and darkness at The Black Latches shall be overthrown."

"Take an old lawyer's advice," was the reply. "Don't play with fire. Tell Mr. Halberton to put a match some night in the [illegible] that [illegible] the [illegible] is built [illegible]. Good night, sir," and with Mr. Polly's last words [illegible] Jack turned back to the web of mystery.

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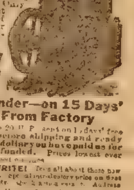

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE MYSTERIOUS BULLET.

JIM PERKINS and his brother Bud returned that morning to find their sister in a state of hysterical excitement.

"Dad has gone to kill John!" she cried. "It is all my fault. I nagged him on. Oh, I wisht I was dead an' in my grave."

While they were trying to quiet her and to get a connected story of the morning's events, John himself arrived.

He galloped to the gate, bearing the unconscious Dorothy in his arms.

He carried his fair burden into the house and laid her on the bed in Sis's room.

"Now, listen," he said, in tones of quiet command. "This young lady has fainted. There has been a serious accident. Dad has fallen into the Clifty Hollow, and I couldn't get him out alone."

"You k[illegible]t him?" asked Bud. He looked threateningly at his own rifle.

"No," declared John. "I did not touch him. I swear that to you, and you know I never have lied to you. But listen:

"You, Sis, will look after the girl, try to restore her to consciousness, and if possible get word to her folks at the mill.

"Jim, you will ride your fastest horse for the doctor and send for the sheriff by the first man you see, for there's been trouble that I don't understand.

"Bud will come with me with the wagon, and we'll bring Dad home. He's unconscious, but he doesn't seem to be fatally hurt. Do you all understand? Then get busy."

Before John and Bud could get the horses hitched to the wagon, Jim was galloping toward town.

John ran through the house, pausing one moment to look at Dorothy.

"Sis," he said; "if you have ever been a friend to me in the world, take good care of her while I'm gone. She's precious to me. I'll do all I can for your father. Now, goodby, Sis, and don't worry."

Within an hour they laid the limp and nerveless body of old Dad Perkins on his own bed. There was a small bullet wound in his shoulder from which he bled but little. His heart beat faintly, but distinctly. They could do but little until the arrival of the doctor.

In the meantime Dorothy had recovered from her swoon.

When she opened her eyes she saw that Sis was bending above her, chafing her throat and face with wet, cold hands.

"You are Sis?" she whispered.

"Yes; you are all right, now; don't worry."

"Your father, is he—is he—"

"He's not dead; they've jist brought him home. They've sent f'r the doctor."

"And Mr. Henderson—he—"

"He's all right," said Sis coldly. "I'll tell him you're better."

"No, no, don't leave me," begged Dorothy.

She caught Sis's hand and held it in both of her own.

"I've done you a great wrong, Sis. But I couldn't help it. Oh, my God in heaven, I hope he lives!"

"They've sent f'r the sheriff, too," said Sis. "If he dies it'll be murder. They don't know who shot him, but whoever done it ought to hang."

She looked at Dorothy accusingly.

"Doesn't Mr. Henderson know?" asked Dorothy.

"He says he don't. But I—when I loosened yer jacket, I found this. An' it has jist been fired."

She held up the little weapon, and at sight of it, Dorothy put her hands over her eyes and shuddered.

"Take it away, Sis. I can't bear to look at it."

Sis laid it on the bureau.

"I am better, now; I must go home."

Sis helped her to coil up her hair and fasten her dress at the throat.

"I am very sorry, Sis, for what I have done. I thank you sincerely for what you have done. I am sure you are as good as you are lovely."

She leaned over impulsively and imprinted a kiss on Sis's cheek. Then she hurried out of the room. She was still weak, but able to sit her horse when John helped her to mount.

During the ride home John did not mention the tragedy, but tried to divert her mind by an incessant chatter about other things. Dorothy answered him in monosyllables, but she gave him a wan smile when he left her at the mill and said that he might come and report when the doctor had passed upon the condition of the wounded man.

At the Perkins homestead John found that both the doctor and the sheriff had arrived. The former was busy with his patient, and the sheriff listened patiently while John told what little he knew of the tragedy.

"I looked up and saw him hanging over the rock. He had me covered with his rifle, and there was death in his eye. Honestly, Mack, I thought my time was at hand. I wouldn't have given two cents for my chance. Then, there was the crack of a gun—it sounded as if it might have been a quarter of a mile away, and he threw his own rifle up just as he fired. I heard the bullet strike the rocks above me. I imagine you can find it flattened there now if you care to go and look. Then his gun fell, and then he fell."

"And you didn't see anybody, or hear anybody?"

"Not a soul. Miss Tyndall, who was sitting up at the head of the hollow, remarked a few minutes before that she thought she saw a man with a gun out towards the road—but that might have been Dad himself, you know."

"Didn't she see anybody around when the shot was fired?"

"I didn't ask her. When I saw that Dad was bad hurt and that I couldn't get him out alone I climbed up and found that she had fainted. I carried her here and left her with Sis while we went back after Dad. She must have seen the old man fall, and it evidently gave her a great shock. I don't believe she could bear to talk about it for a day or two."

"What is your opinion, John?" asked Sheriff McElhany.

"I think it was a chance shot, fired by some hunter, who doesn't know yet that he hit anybody."

"It looks almost like providence to me," said the sheriff gravely. "At any rate it saved your life."

"It certainly did—but here comes the doctor. How is it, Doc?"

The physician was holding a flattened piece of lead in his hand.

"Oddest thing you ever saw," he said. "The bullet, it seems to be a small one, must have been nearly spent. It glanced along the shoulder blade under the skin and buried itself in the seventh cervical verebra. The shock and the pressure combined were sufficient to cause an instant paralysis, which the fall accentuated."

"You don't look at it as serious," said the sheriff.

"He has already recovered consciousness. You can speak to him if you want to. The bullet was not half an inch from the surface. It did not touch either artery or nerve. He'll be as well as ever in a few days. The wound is nothing."

"Hurrah for that," exclaimed John.

"I don't know," said the sheriff, as he looked gravely at John, "that you've got any right to holler. You ain't out of the woods yet. If Dad is not hurt much he may try another shot at you. I guess he'll be safer, and you certainly will be, if I lock him up for assault with intent to kill."

"You can talk to him if you want to," said the doctor.

"Leave him to me," said John. "I'll go in and see him after he rests awhile. If I need your help I'll let you know, Mack."

"Well, it's your funeral," said the sheriff, laughing. "But I don't want to get you killed. Here, Jim," he called, and the young man came up, looking [illegible]er surly. "I just want to say th[illegible] was in the act of taking a sh[illegible] when somebody was lucky enough to get to him first. Doc says he's not hurt bad. He'll be out in a few days. You tell him from me that he's got to cut out this damned foolishness. If anything happens to John I'll hang the whole —— —— Perkins family. Now, remember that."

"They ain't nothin' goin' to happen to him, Mack."

"Dad'll be all right when he gets well. Bud an' me's goin' to sell out an' go to Texas. We're mighty glad things came out 's lucky as they did."

"All right, Jim; but you be sure and remember what I told you. And I'd advise you to clean out and leave as soon as you can. I don't want to go against my duty, but John here is friendly to you, and I'll give you a straight tip. The revenue raiders are working in Madison County, and they're liable to be here in a week or two."

"They don't find nothin' here," said Jim.

"An' as f'r John, I was jist talkin' to Dad. Sis has done made him promise that he'll never try to harm John again. An' you know Dad never breaks a promise. He was on the wrong trail this mornin'. He was mistaken."

"Does he know who shot him?"

"He hain't got the least idea. He says they was nobody in sight, an' that John didn't have any gun. He never knowed what happened. He thought he had killed John, an' is as tickled as anybody to know that things came out so well."

"It was a mysterious bullet, all right," said the sheriff, as he mounted his horse. "But since there was no particular harm done we will pass it up for the present. So long, you fellows."

CHAPTER XVIII.

NOW FOR THE GHOST.

The four eventful days of waiting were over.

The little army of ghost hunters, headed by Prof. Tyndall, had made their way to the haunted rock.

The camp followers were the four members of the Perkins family—Old Dad, with his arm in a sling so that the inadvertent movement of his shoulder might not disturb the dressing on his wound, but otherwise almost as well as ever—while Sis and the two boys observed the investigators with silent curiosity.

Pegleg Dodson the miller and John Henderson were allies, actively engaged in helping to solve the fifty-year-old mystery of the ghost.

While the others chattered along the bank or searched among the rocky crevices near by, Prof. Tyndall and John Henderson took a canoe and rowed out into the river.

Here John told the professor the story of the ghost and explained how it invariably leaped into the water and disappeared at the point of the haunted rock.

"The first thing to look for," said the professor, "is the probability or at least the possibility of a human trick. Now, could a man who was a good swimmer dive off that rock and then gently come to the surface out in the stream, and swim softly away without being observed?"

"He could not," said John promptly. "I have seen that ghost disappear many a time, when the moon was bright or in the early twilight. You see this is a deep hole,

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and there is no current to disturb the surface. Usually it is protected from the wind, and the river is smooth as glass."

"It is so today, aside from the waves caused by the boat," said the professor.

"Yes; if you will take the boat away and stand on the other side, you will see—"

"Let's see what we shall see," said the professor. "It is better always to demonstrate a thing than to theorize about it."

They rowed to the other side and sat down on a log which lay on the edge of the stream.

"Now you notice that the other side of the river is bare rock," said John, pointing. "There is no underbrush there along the bank in which a swimmer could hide."

"That is true."

"And as for a swimmer getting away without revealing himself, that is manifestly impossible—even if there were some one who cared to keep up such a pastime as a joke for nearly fifty years."

"It seems altogether unreasonable, if not impossible," admitted the professor.

"Absolutely impossible," insisted the younger man. "When the sheen of the moonlight or the twilight is on the surface of the river you can see the slightest movement. You can see the water bugs skipping, even. There would be no chance for the best swimmer to come to the surface for his breath without betraying himself."

"Well, we will take it for granted, then, that the diver disappears under the water and does not come up again. Could any human being do that?"

"You'll have to explain it to me, if they could."

Professor Tyndall was silent.

"Does the ghost come in winter?" he asked after awhile.

"Seldom," said John; "though of course that may be because it is not watched for so often."

"Have you ever seen it dive through the ice?"

"No," John laughed.

"A genuine ghost might do so, you know," said the professor gravely. "It is impalpable. I've seen them move through solid walls without the slightest sound."

"Well, whether it be genuine or not, I can't say, professor; but this ghost is different. It may be impalpable, but it is not silent. It makes a splash in the water that you can both see and hear."

"Oh," said the professor. "That is an interesting point. I must try to observe it myself. We will come this evening at twilight, and if the ghost walks I will take careful notes of the phenomena."

The hunt for the present being over, the party returned to the ferry.

Dorothy and Sis walked together. They talked of John Henderson.

"He has bought our place," said Sis. "He paid Dad more than it is worth, I am afraid, but that is like John. He's allus been free handed with his money."

"Why, I didn't know he had any money," exclaimed Dorothy.

Sis laughed. "John's rich," she declared. "He owns the mill, an' the place where the Beavers live, besides hundreds of acres up an' down the bottom, on both sides o' the river. He's got money in the bank."

"The first day I saw him he was bare footed."

"He comes down here every summer an' tramps aroun' jist like the rest of us natives," said Sis. "He says he likes to do it."

"Then he doesn't live here!"

"Oh, no; John ain't lived here reg'lar sence he fust went went away to college, eight years ago. He's a lawyer in Chicago. I reckon he'll see you when you go back home."

"Probably," said Dorothy, smiling softly.

"I c'n see you an' him's going' to marry," pursued Sis. "I was mad about it at fust. But it's all right. Me an' him's allus been good frien's, an' if I was ever fool enough to think of anything else, it was my fault. I'll say that. Now we're all goin' to Texas an' take a new start. I'm glad enough to git away, an' I reckon it'll be a good thing f'r Dad an' the boys."

The two girls were silent for awhile.

"I hope you'll be happy, wherever you go," said Dorothy at last. "You deserve it, Sis. You're a good girl, and I'd like to be friends with you all of my life."

"I reckon we won't never see one another any more after you go away. Maybe it's jist as well. We're goin' to leave tomorrow. John's bought all the stock, the crop and everything except the wagon an' team. I reckon I'll hear the ghost cry f'r the last time tonight. It don't seem right to go away an' leave it all."

"Do you suppose the ghost will be out tonight?"

"It's nearly shore to be," said Sis.

CHAPTER XIX.

SEES HIS QUARRY.

Professor Tyndall and John rowed up the river at sunset.

They rounded the point of the haunted rock and took a careful survey of the neighborhood.

"The stage is not set for any of the ordinary forms of mediumistic trickery," said Prof. Tyndall. "I think this promises to be the most interesting ghost I've ever investigated."

"Shall we remain here and try to catch it if it comes?"

"I think not, Mr. Henderson. I want to see it first, and I don't care to take the chance of frightening it away. We'll row to the other side of the river and remain in the boat. Then if the ghost comes we'll row over here as rapidly as possible."

They had not long to wait.

As the twilight deepened the wind died down and the surface of the river shone almost luminously.

There was not a sound, save that of an occasional night bird, and not a ripple disturbed the water.

"There it comes," whispered John.

Professor Tyndall adjusted his spectacles.

"I see it," he said.

The ghost was gliding along the rocks along the other side of the river, perhaps fifty yards below the haunted ledge. It was tall and noiseless, and its shape could not be made out in the dim light.

When it reached the point just opposite the two breathless watchers, it turned and made its way out on the rock—the haunted rock.

At the very point of the ledge it paused and lifted up its arms, from which trailed long, ghostly, shroud-like wings.

"Oo—oo—ooh," it cried.

Then the two hands came together, and the ghostly body shot into the river, head foremost.

There was a distinct and audible splash, and as the water closed over it the waves rippled out in every direction.

At the instant the ghost screamed the boat shot out from its hiding place, and when the wraith disappeared the professor and John were ha[illegible]ay across the river.

When they [illegible] point of the haunted rock th[illegible]ed down and an eerie stillness had settled over the bottom.

They rowed up and down the river, looking everywhere, but there was no sign.

"It is a complete mystery—at present," admitted the professor, as they rowed up to the rock again. "How deep is the water here?"

"Oh, it must be twenty feet, at least. It is the deepest place in the river."

The professor peered down into the depths, as if he were trying to read the riddle.

"It is an interesting case," he mused. "I'm willing to admit that the cleverest swimmer alive could not get away from here without being discovered. There remains just one possibility, and we will investigate that tomorrow morning."

"What is it?"

"You will pardon me, I am sure, for not telling you what I suspect," said the professor. "My plan is not fully matured. Let us return to the mill."

Dorothy met them at the river bank.

"You saw the ghost, I'm sure," she exclaimed. "We heard its cry even here."

"Yes, dear, we saw it. I think we will solve the mystery of it tomorrow. But I'm going to run into my tent, if you will excuse me. I have some arrangem make."

He hurried away, and Dorothy until John could tie the boat. The there side by side in silence until fessor had disappeared in his ten voices of the other campers could b cheerily, in the canvas dining room John turned and held out his arms

"My darling!" he whispered.

She lay in his arms for a minute, utter abandon of happiness.

Then, with a low laugh, she pushe away.

"You are a fraud," she said. "You humbug. Sis told me about you too don't like you any more."

He took her in his arms and he there.

"You can't help it, my darling. Yo my woman. Look at me!"

But she would not look and he p hand under her chin and drew her up toward him.

"Oh, how I love you," he whispered, ing her again and again.

"Humbug!" she said, but she laughed derly.

"What did Sis tell you, sweethear

"That you are rich; that you a lawyer; that you live in Chicago."

"Only a few blocks from the univer my sweet one. Just to think, we have near each other for years, and at las meet here. If it wasn't for my bl grandmother's ghost I might never seen you."

"Then you would have married some else."

"Never," he declared. "You are my d woman. There is never another in whole world that would have satisfied I knew you the minute I set eyes you."

"When I promised to marry you I tho you were a wild mountain boy," she po "Before that I was half afraid of you was only when I saw that dreadful man hanging over the rock with his pointed at you that I knew I had al loved you, and that if you died my h would be broken."

"Then blessings be on old Dad Per and upon whatever lucky soul it was fired that mysterious bullet into shoulder."

"Don't you really know who it was shot him, John?"

"Why, certainly not. Do you?"

"Yes," she said.

Then she confessed to him how she taken her tiny weapon from her jacket fired at the old man just as he was in act of committing murder.

"So it was you that saved my life. W you plucky darling."

"I thought I had killed him," she sh dered. "And I was glad of it. Don't see how wicked I am? It frightens me to think of it. I might have been a m deress."

"No, not a murderess, not even if you killed him," said John, stoutly. "And h you told no one?"

"I told Aunt Annabel. She says I right. But right or wrong I should h done it, and then rejoiced afterward, Jo

"And to think I never guessed it."

"You are not as clever as Sis," she reproachfully. "She knew, because found the pistol when she opened my ja and saw that one bullet had been rece fired."

"Sis is a brick. She did not tell sheriff, not even when she thought father might have been fatally wounded

"She shielded me for your sake, John

"You didn't need any shielding, goos he laughed. "Even if you had killed old man it would not have been any cri either legally or morally. I'm glad, ho ever, that it all happened just as it did. fates have been very kind to us, sw heart."

After awhile they went back to t camp, John mounted his horse and ro away home, finding that the magic of lo had touched all the world with the glamo of perfect happiness.

CHAPTER XX.

KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.

John was awakened shortly after daylight the next morning by the emigrants bound for Texas. He found the Perkins family snugly ensconced in a covered wagon, followed by such of the hounds as had escaped the slaughter of Prof. Tyndall's party when they escaped from the hen-house.

The good-bys were said with real feeling on both sides, and then the movers went on their way—the old man resigned, the boys eager, Sis silent.

Later in the day when John reached the mill he found Prof. Tyndall in his tent, where he had rigged up a sort of laboratory.

"Don't smoke, and be careful how you move around," said the professor. "I have enough explosives in here to blow up the country if they were properly mixed."

"Explosives?"

"Yes; see here." The professor picked up a small, wide-mouthed jar which contained a yellow, sticky looking liquid. "This is a nitroglycerin compound which is more powerful than any explosive used in war or in industries. It creates such havoc that one dares not use it except in the most solitary places. Its chemical reaction is so quick that it does not have to be confined."

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Come with me, and I will show you," said the professor.

He took the jar gingerly in his hand and led the way outside.

"You can shoot a gun, I suppose?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," said John.

"Then go in the main tent and g a Winchester, which you will find lying on the table, and bring it to the boat."

When John reached the landing place with the gun, he found that the professor had preceded him, and was seated in the stern of the boat.

"Now lay your gun in here carefully, g the oars ready, and push off with as litt shock as possible," commanded the professor. "There is no particular danger, but we want to be careful."

He looked at John and smiled.

"I understand you are going to be a member of my family," he said, "and of course I'm not going to blow you up."

"I came today to ask your permission to join your family," said John, blushing. "I am prepared to submit my credentials and

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hope that you will find upon investigation that I am not such a bad fellow, though I know, of course, that no man could be worthy of your daughter."

"All I hope or ask is that you make her happy. Now, row us to the haunted rock, and please be careful how you rock the boat."

When they reached the ledge, John held the boat while the professor climbed cautiously out upon the rock.

"I am going to spread this explosive on the rock, now, and you may row away, so that if anything happens you will be out of the danger zone."

"Oh, I will stay with you, professor," said John, cheerfully. "If we are to be blown up, let us go together."

"Very well, John."

The professor measured the rock with his eye and finally chose a spot about fifteen back from the point.

Opening the jar he carefully poured a band of the yellow liquid across the rock from one side to the other. It looked like a ribbon of ocher paint.

"We are going to knock at the door of the ghost, and see if she is at home," he said, as he set the bottle, still containing about an inch of the explosive, on the center of the painted band.

He crept into the boat.

"Now row across the river," he said, and John, still wondering what would happen, obeyed.

"This compound, in exploding, has the tendency to exert its greatest force downward. When the detonation takes place I expect to cut that rock squarely in two, and let the outer end of it fall in the river," said the professor.

"And what will that do to the ghost?"

"Has it ever occurred to you that there might be a cave in the hillside, and that the entrance to it may be concealed under the surface of the water?"

"No," exclaimed John.

"So that a good diver could go down, turn, enter the cave and thus make his way back into the mountain, and come out at some other point?" pursued the professor.

"I never thought of such a thing," said John. "And yet, now I remember there is an old Indian legend that tells of such an occurrence, and I believe Byron used the same idea in one of his poems."

"Yes, there are a number of such caverns in the world. This may be one of them. It may not. We shall see."

They had now reached the opposite shore.

"The pieces of rock may fly in all directions," said the professor, "so for safety sake we will tie the boat and hide behind the trees on this bank."

"But how are you going to set off your explosive?"

"You are going to fire a rifle bullet into that bottle, of course."

"Oh, I see," said John. "I must be very dull."

The two men found shelter behind an immense sycamore, and John, taking careful aim with the Winchester, pulled the trigger and then dodged back.

There was a dull boom, and then the broken pieces of rock rattled about them through the tree tops.

They leaped in the boat and rowed like mad across the river.

What they found was a most surprising thing.

The haunted rock, which had been cut clear in two by the blast, was a mere shell. Inside of it was the entrance to a cavern, and they rowed the boat and landed it upon the slippery floor of the cave.

"You see, this is the home of the ghost, John," said Professor Tyndall, to his amazed companion. "And it is apparent that your ghost is either a human being or else it has a very solid and material body. Here are fresh prints of an unshod foot, made not many hours since. It is apparent that your ghost, when he dived into the river last night, walked out this way. No wonder we could find no trace of him."

"And here is a pile of pine knots, and some matches on this dry shelf," said John. "It is evident that he was able to make a light whenever he chose. Let us explore a little further."

Lighting a torch, John led the way back into the subterranean passage. Even here it was high enough for them to stand upright, and it increased in height and width rapidly as they passed back. Before they had gone twenty yards they found themselves in a spacious chamber, which showed unmistakable signs of recent human habitation. There were not only many footprints on the muddy floor, but there were benches, chairs, a table and a number of barrels.

On the center of the little table was an envelope, and when Prof. Tyndall picked it up he gave an exclamation of amazement.

"Why, this is addressed to you!" he cried.

John took the letter and looked at it.

It bore his name, and the handwriting was that of Sis Perkins. Like many another native, Sis could read and write very well, and expressed herself on paper much more correctly and elegantly than she did when she used the spoken word.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

"My Dear Friend John"—so the letter began—"I am writing this for Dad, who expects that you will discover his cave after he has gone away. The wonderful story he tells is something I guessed at myself, some years ago, but I never was sure of it. Perhaps if I had known the whole truth I would not have told you. My first duty is to my own father.

"Day says to tell you that he was a nineteen-year-old boy when your grandmother jumped into the river and was drowned. He knew the poor crazed lady, and was, I suspect, in love with her himself before she met the soldier who became her husband.

"He discovered the entrance to this cave while diving in search of your grandmother's body, which he declares never was found. With a boy's love for the romantic and the secret, he did not tell about the cave, and his first appearance as the ghost happened as a joke. He cried out loudly and jumped into the river one evening to frighten some other young men who were fishing on the other side of the stream.

"His appearance as a ghost created such a sensation that he kept it up for awhile, just to enjoy the consternation of his neighbors. Then after awhile he conceived the idea of using the cave as a distillery. He had frightened everybody away from the haunted neighborhood, and he continued playing the ghost at necessary intervals for many years afterward.

"This made his distillery safe from the prying officers who were trying to break up the business of the moonshiners.

"When Bud and Jim grew large enough he took them into the secret, and Jim, who as you know is an excellent swimmer, took the role of ghost upon himself. Jim enjoyed it. I think probably he never had as much fun out of anything else in the world as he did out of his job of playing the ghost.

"It was Jim who screamed and jumped into the river the night you took shelter from the rain there with Miss Tyndall.

"It is Jim who is going to take this letter to the cave tonight, and make his last appearance on the ghostly stage.

"My dear John, I hope you will not judge us too harshly. We will be far on our way to Texas when you read this, and I hope you will be able to remember your old friends kindly.

"At any rate you may be sure that all I have told you is true.

"The mystery of the ghost is solved. It will never be seen again.

"You can use your pleasure about making our share in the story public, though of course I hope you will not find it necessary to expose us among our old neighbors.

"Good-by, John, and may Heaven make you happy.

"Your old friend,
"SIS PERKINS."

"So that solves the mystery of the ghost," said Professor Tyndall. "It is a very interesting case—very interesting—but alas, there is no ghost here. I expect, however, to find a genuine ghost before I die."

"I don't think I'll ever believe in ghosts again," said John.

"I shall always believe in them, even if I never find one," said the professor. "Otherwise I would cease to be a ghost hunter."

"I'm glad of one thing," said Pegleg Dodson. "Now that the ghost has been laid I will be able to persuade the Widow Miller, over on Clifty Creek, to come to the mill and live. If I don't send you word of my weddin' before Thanksgivin' Day you may call me a Dutchman."

"I'm through with ghost hunting," said the disgusted Prof. Searcy.

"That's because he couldn't get Dorothy," whispered Aunt Annabel. "He wanted her all the time. He just pretended to be looking for ghosts."

"I'm satisfied with what I found in these dear hills," said Dorothy shyly, as he looked at John. "There are so many other things better and more important than ghosts, and we have found the best thing of all."

"And that is Love," said John.

The end.

A Wife Not Easily Fooled.

Griggs—So you got home from the club at midnight. Well, I suppose you told wifie you had to work late at the office; played upon her sympathies, eh?

Briggs—Well—er—yes; but either her sympathies were out of tune or I'm a darned poor instrumentalist.

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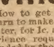

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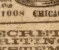

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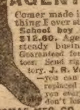

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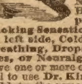

YOUR HEART

Does it Flutter, Palpitate or Skip Beats? Have you Shortness of Breath, Tenderness, Numbness or Pain in left side, Dizziness, Fainting Spells, Spots before eyes, Sudden Starting in sleep, Nervousness, Nightmare, Hungry or Weak Spells, Oppressed Feeling in chest, Choking Sensation in throat, Painful to lie on left side, Cold Hands or Feet, Difficult Breathing, Dropsy, Swelling of feet or ankles, or Neuralgia around heart? If you have one or more of the above symptoms, don't fail to use **Dr. Kinsman's Celebrated Heart Tablets,** the remedy which has made so many marvelous cures. Not a secret or "patent" medicine. One out of four has a weak or diseased heart. Three fourths of these do not know it, and thousands die who have been wrongfully treated for the Stomach, Lungs, Kidneys or Nerves. Don't drop dead like hundreds of others when **Dr. Kinsman's Heart Tablets** will cure you.

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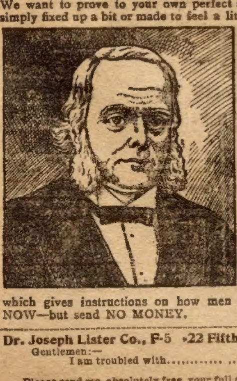
I think I owe it to my fellow man to send them a copy in confidence so that any man anywhere who is weak and discouraged with repeated failures may stop drugging himself with harmful patent medicines, secure what I believe is the quickest-acting restorative, upbuilding, SPOT-TOUCHING remedy ever devised, and so cure himself at home quietly and quickly. Just drop me a line like this: Dr. A. E. Robinson, 3791 Luck Building, Detroit, Mich., and I will send you a copy of this splendid recipe in a plain ordinary envelope free of charge. A great many doctors would charge $3.00 to $5.00 for merely writing out a prescription like this—but I send it entirely free.



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THE IGNORANT OWL.

Once on a time there was a little ordinary owl
That sat upon a crooked branch and talked the whole night through.
He'd never been to school. He was an ignorant young fowl,
And quite without regard for rules he said: "To who! To who!"

To Catch Deer.

If any one wishes to catch a deer in Maine, all he has to do is hire a horse and carriage and go driving through the woods, and if he is as lucky as Francis F. Mitchell, a New York man, he will catch a deer. Mr. Mitchell was passing a vacation in Maine a week ago and had gone driving through the forest, when such a thing happened to him. He caught a deer. It did not stay caught. It merely jumped from the woods at the side of the road into the carriage where Mr. Mitchell was sitting. Mr. Mitchell was not making a zoological collection at the time, and so he jumped out even before the deer did. Some of the people that have heard the story think Mr. Mitchell is exaggerating a bit.

BABY O'GRUNDY.

Was born on a Monday,
Walked on a Tuesday,
Wore trousers on Wednesday,
Played football on Thursday;
Was mended on Friday,
Grew whiskers on Saturday,
Fell in love on Sunday;
And that was the end
Of Baby O'Grundy!

ROYAL RULE.

Never, never a day should pass
Without some kindness kindly shown;
This is a motto, dear laddie and lass,
To think upon daily and take for your own.

THORNS OF SPRINGTIME.

We hate to see the house fly
When winter days are o'er,
And we hate to see the grass fly
When we have to push the mower.

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You may not believe my offer, because you do not know me personally, and you do not know my word is good as gold. You may have seen ads before, offering full treatments, and then when you answered them, found out that in each case you got a small trial treatment, lasting a few days or a week, and that you had to send money first to get the full treatment, and you may think this offer is just like all the rest **--IT IS NOT--** please don't think I am trying to fool you—No—I don't do that kind of business. Don't think there is a string to this offer—there are no strings to this offer—**NO INDEED.** I said I would send you a full, complete treatment, and **I WILL DO SO.** You won't be fooled. I will send you a **REGULAR, FULL TREATMENT,** just as I say I will. I will send it charges paid, as soon as I hear from you--**THE SAME DAY--BY RETURN MAIL.** There are no promises to make—no papers to sign—no references to give—no charges or C. O. D.'s to pay, and you are not obligated to spend a penny.

I have helped thousands to regain their health. Those with tired, lame, aching backs, with unbearable bladder and urinary troubles, others stiff and bent with rheumatism—and I have made them well, the most chronic, severe, long standing obstinate cases, after all else had failed to cure them. Hundreds using my treatment in despair, have gone their way rejoicing. They were hopeless, and it made them well. They were suffering, and it eased their pains, soothed their aches, brightened their lives and made them happy, and now, I offer my wonderful treatment to you—**FREE TO TRY—TAKE IT—USE IT—AND GET WELL.**

If you have backache, **KIDNEY, BLADDER TROUBLE or RHEUMATISM,** dizziness, puffy swellings under the eyes or in the feet and ankles, nervousness, tired and worn out feeling, if the urine is light and pale, dark coloured or cloudy, if you make water often, getting up during the night, if it smarts and burns in passing, if there is sediment or brick dust when it stands, **YOU NEED MY TREATMENT WITHOUT A MINUTES DELAY.**

My specialty is such diseases. I treat thousands of cases—helping them after all else has failed. I am successful in my life work, because I love it. I love my profession. My whole mind and soul is wrapped up in it, and I am happy. You would be happy too, if you were bringing happiness to thousands of suffering people right along, as I am now. I love to feel I am helping people to enjoy life, and I want to help you to see the bright side of life, and enjoy every minute of **TRUE HEALTH AND HAPPINESS.**

I want to help you to get well, and be strong again, so you can work, and walk, and run, and jump without pain, so you can sleep without disturbance, and wake up refreshed and rested, able to use every muscle, nerve, chord, and joint of your body, without suffering misery all the time.

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Take it when it comes. Use half of it, **AND SEE JUST WHAT IT DOES.** Then when you know it has helped you, **WHEN YOU KNOW YOU ARE GETTING BETTER,** just send me a small amount, an amount within your easy reach—an amount you can easily afford to spare—that is all I ask. I know you'll be willing to do your part and send me some money, **WHEN IT HELPS YOU--AND YOUR WORD IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.** It will help you quickly. But you are to pay nothing **UNTIL IT DOES.** Use it first, pay afterwards when you know, **NOT BEFORE.** When you have used half of it, if you are not satisfied, return what's left, **AND PAY NOTHING. IT DON'T COST YOU A PENNY TO TRY MY TREATMENT--** I will send it to you charges paid, **TAKE IT, TRY IT FREE, AND FIND OUT.**

I am the only one today making this offer, sending a full treatment, for such diseases, **FREE TO TRY.** I could not afford to do it, if I was not sure it would help you—if I did not know it would cure—if I wasnt sure. That's why I can afford to send it first--**BUT YOU ARE THE ONE TO DECIDE,** you are the one to be the judge. It must help you, it must satisfy you—**BEFORE YOU SEND A PENNY.** And you are the one to say, **I WILL TAKE YOUR WORD.** It's all left right with you yourself. What you say goes. That's all I care for. I don't want a penny until it helps you. I would not take a cent that I am not entitled to. I believe in giving everyone a square deal--in being honest--it's my religion--I want to do what's right--that's why I am making you the **BROADEST. MOST STRAIGHT-FORWARD. FAIREST, MOST LIBERAL ONE SIDED OFFER, EVER MADE.** When I have confidence enough in my treatment to send it to you this way, I know you'll **BE WILLING TO TRY IT FREE.** Don't send a penny in your letter. **NOT EVEN A POSTAGE STAMP.** Just your name and address and where to send the treatment. Address your letter to me personally, like this:
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